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ABSTRACT

This handbook, directed toward governing boards, provides strategies to help district and county boards prevent or reduce school violence. It focuses on prevention and early intervention. This second edition was updated in response to school-safety issues following several incidents in American schools. Following an executive summary and introductory chapter, the second chapter "Assessment of the Problem," describes the problem and identifies the effects of school violence. Chapter 3, "Contributing Factors and Early Warning Signs," discusses the causes of violent behavior and provides early and imminent warning signs of violence. Chapter 4, "The Board's Role in Prevention and Intervention of School Violence," discusses the following key points: setting a vision and climate for safe schools; adopting a policy; adopting curriculum; allocating resources; serving as a judicial and appeals body; ensuring program accountability; ensuring personnel accountability; becoming advocates for safe schools; and encouraging collaborative approaches. The final chapter, "Serving Youth Through Alternative Education Programs," focuses on the needs of students who have been or are considered to be a threat. Appended is a listing of sample safety programs in California. (Contains 18 Web resources and 110 references.) (WFA)

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# Protecting Our children

## *Governing Board Strategies to Promote School Safety*

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# Protecting Our Children

## *Governing Board Strategies to Promote School Safety*

**1999 Second Edition**

*California School Boards Association*
*3100 Beacon Blvd.*
*West Sacramento, CA 95691*
*916-371-4691*
*www.csba.org*

CSBA

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# Preface



A safe school environment is a prerequisite for effective teaching and learning. Yet, when violence is so prevalent in our communities and in society at large, maintaining safe conditions in our schools is not an easy task. Creating a safe environment requires a deep commitment by governing boards, all school staff, parents, the community, state and federal leaders, the media and the students themselves.

The role of governing boards and superintendents in these efforts is critical. The governing board can impact the school environment through its vision, policies, budget, curriculum guidelines, judicial and appeals proceedings, advocacy and support of collaborative community efforts. By using these key leverage points within the school system, the board can place safety as a high priority in the district and provide leadership to ensure that appropriate strategies are developed.

The obligation of schools to protect students from violence, including violence inflicted by other students, is clear. However, schools also have an obligation to meet the educational needs of those students who are disruptive or who threaten the safety of others. By ensuring that educational and support services are provided to these troubled youth, boards increase the likelihood that these youth can become productive, nonviolent adults.

This handbook provides strategies to help district and county governing boards prevent or reduce school violence. It was originally developed by CSBA's School Safety Task Force, appointed in 1994 to examine issues related to school violence and recommend strategies for prevention and intervention. The handbook was updated in 1999 in response to the increasing attention to school safety issues following several tragic occurrences in schools throughout the nation.

The handbook was written with the assistance of CSBA's Board of Directors, Delegate Assembly and Coordinated Children's Services Task Force, who provided extensive input regarding the problems and potential solutions related to school violence. The California School Leadership Academy, the California School/Law Enforcement Partnership Cadre, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing and a number of districts and county offices of education also provided useful information to the School Safety Task Force. Finally, CSBA expresses its deep appreciation to Piper Jaffray for helping to underwrite this project. U.S. Bancorp/Piper Jaffray supported the original project as well as the 1999 revision. This handbook could not have been completed without the support and assistance of all these individuals and agencies.

# Executive Summary



Violence and crime are increasingly a concern for every community, and our schools are not immune. The widespread perception today is that school violence is a pervasive problem, yet schools are often the safest place in the community.

When violence does occur at school, it impacts students' school attendance and their learning, staff's ability to teach and discipline students and their willingness to stay in the profession, and parents' and the community's confidence in the schools. Thus, schools must work to prevent extreme acts of violence and must be prepared in the event such acts occur. They must also pay attention to incidents of verbal or physical altercations, sexual harassment, defiance of school rules and any other act that harms people either physically or psychologically.

Ultimately, to make significant reductions in the level of violence in our communities and schools, society must address the root causes of violence. Among the factors cited by research as contributing to violent behavior are biological factors, emotional and cognitive development, family and childrearing conditions, relations to peers, effects of poverty, prejudice and discrimination, social acceptability of violent behavior, alcohol and drug use, and negative factors in the school environment.

But more immediate strategies are also necessary to curb school violence and to deal with it when it does occur. The focus should be on prevention and early intervention, although schools need to be prepared for crisis intervention. An effective approach to school safety must include:

- **Sufficient and ongoing resources**
  The state must allocate the resources necessary to ensure our schools are safe. We cannot continue to meet school safety challenges without a sufficient and ongoing fiscal commitment.

- **Decision-making flexibility**
  The state must give school districts and their local communities the flexibility to determine how best to invest and allocate resources to maximize school safety.

- **Use of existing data and structures**
  State and local policy initiatives must be based upon accurate information about the relative level of school violence, its causes and solutions. The availability of research and effective models of practice, and the expertise of existing federal, state and local groups, represent excellent sources of information and advice to guide policy making.

- **Comprehensive strategies**
  Multiple causes of school violence necessitate a comprehensive approach to its resolution. Local strategies must draw upon a locally tailored repertoire of prevention and intervention strategies, with a focus on prevention to the extent possible.

- **Collaboration**
  Schools cannot eliminate violence on their own. Stemming the tide of violence requires a societal approach to prevention and intervention. All institutions, organizations and individuals must accept responsibility for their critical roles and should collaborate to find solutions. Governing boards, all school staff, parents, the entire community, state and federal leaders, the media and students themselves must contribute to the reduction of school violence.

Within this framework, this handbook focuses on leadership strategies that can be used by the governing boards and superintendents of school districts and county offices of education to promote safe schools for students and staff. The governance team can enhance school safety through each of its key leverage points:

- **Setting a vision and climate for safe schools**
  In its vision statement or mission and goals, the board can emphasize its priority on school safety and its commitment to support preventative approaches and early intervention.

- **Becoming advocates for safe schools**
  The board has a responsibility to provide leadership in the schools and the community, to draw attention to the needs of schools and garner the support necessary to address those needs. The board should have a proactive plan to address school safety issues in the community and should also be prepared to react to issues or situations that occur on campuses. Because local, state and federal officials also make decisions that impact school safety, the board should also seek opportunities to influence legislative and regulatory bodies on these issues.

- **Adopting policy**
  The board governs through the adoption and monitoring of policies that guide action in the school system. Policies state what the board wants and why. Administrative regulations developed by the superintendent and his/her staff provide the procedures for implementing the policies. The district may adopt overall policies and regulations on school safety as well as individual policies addressing specific aspects of school safety (e.g., discipline, suspension and expulsion, gang prevention education, sexual harassment, truancy, drugs and alcohol, positive school climate, visitor registration, etc.).

- **Serving as a judicial and appeals body**
  There are several typical judicial proceedings for which the board is the appellate body, including suspension and expulsion hearings. It is important that the board ensure compliance with legal requirements and students' due process rights.

- **Adopting curriculum**
  The board adopts guidelines for curricula, and thus can support efforts to teach students constructive ways of dealing with their anger and frustration. Examples include curricula in conflict resolution, character/values education, multicultural education, service learning, social skills development, self-esteem development and media analysis skills.

- **Ensuring program accountability**
  The board monitors program outcomes and holds the superintendent and staff accountable. To fulfill this role, the board should request periodic information on the outcomes of programs and the overall safety of the schools.

- **Ensuring personnel accountability**
  The board's role in personnel matters is important, albeit limited. The board can impact the climate and safety of schools through the adoption of personnel policies, selection and evaluation of the superintendent, and collective bargaining. In addition, the board can ensure that staff members are trained in violence prevention and intervention so that they can be prepared for any situation.

- **Allocating resources**
  The board adopts the district budget and, in so doing, must ensure that budget priorities reflect the goals and priorities set forth in its vision. If school safety is a priority of the board, funds must be allocated to support related programs and activities. Funds may also be available from foundation and government grants.

- **Encouraging collaborative approaches**
  Because no single element causes violence and violence is not limited to one environment, collaboration among agencies and community organizations is essential for reducing violence. The board can use all its leverage points discussed above in order to encourage coordination of services within the community. Other publications are available from CSBA to provide further information about the board's role in collaboration.

Finally, in their effort to provide safe schools for students and staff, boards cannot forget the needs of those students who are considered to be, or have proven to be, a threat. As more schools adopt stricter policies and "zero tolerance" offenses increase, the need for educational services outside the regular school environment will continue to grow. When students are removed from the regular school program, they must be referred to alternative education programs better prepared to address their behavior and their educational needs. Both districts and county offices of education develop and operate these programs. They vary in form and scope but must adhere to state guidelines. Although students must learn that violence is unacceptable and has consequences, educators also need to help these students become productive members of society.

# 1. Introduction



Violence and crime are increasingly a concern for every community, whether large or small, urban or rural. Public surveys confirm that school safety is a high priority among the public — parents are concerned about their children's safety, and citizens are calling for action from all quarters of the community.

Any violence at school is cause for concern, and a few extreme incidents of school violence across the nation remind us that we need to do more. All too often, however, the perception of school violence is worse than the reality. For the most part, schools are far safer than the community around them, and the majority of violent incidents committed by and against youth occur off school grounds. Furthermore, while antisocial, violent behavior does occur at schools, it does not typically involve the weapons or critical injuries that the media are quick to report.

There are many different behaviors that can be called "violent." The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines violence as "physical force exerted for the purpose of violating, damaging, or abusing . . . An act or instance of violent action or behavior . . . untamed force . . . the abusive or unjust exercise of power." In criminal justice terms, violent crimes include specific types of behavior, including assault, battery, homicide, robbery, extortion, sexual assault and assault with a deadly weapon. For schools, and for purposes of this handbook, violence is defined as all of the above, plus the verbal or psychological attacks that students and staff may endure from students, staff or parents.

Schools, of course, must work to prevent extreme acts of violence and must be prepared in the event such acts occur. However, threats to campus safety typically involve incidents of verbal or physical altercations, student-to-student sexual harassment or defiance of school rules. Therefore, these more pervasive behaviors also demand attention by schools — and for good reason. Not only

**"We must put our kids first. Board members must take the lead and keep our schools free of violence. To do so, we need to continue to invest in our schools and in our communities—not tomorrow, not next week, but today."**

***—Leslie DeMersseman,***
*1999 President, California School Boards Association*

do these acts create an atmosphere of intimidation and fear and interfere with the educational process, but research increasingly points to these less extreme acts of antisocial behavior as precursors to more serious acts.

*The Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Problems* recently reported that "highly aggressive, antisocial behavior is approximately as stable as intelligence over a decade. . . [T]hus, very aggressive patterns observed early in a child's development are very likely to be in evidence later in their school careers and beyond" (Walker, 1993, p. 22). Longitudinal data on 80 boys reported in this same article found that three behavior measures taken in the fifth grade accurately predicted the arrest records of approximately 80 percent of the boys in tenth grade. The measures were teacher ratings of social skills, negative playground behavior by the target student and his peers during recess periods, and discipline contacts with the principal's office as measured by written file records.

This research provides strong indications that behavior patterns can be identified and predicted fairly accurately early in a child's school career, but later difficulties are not unalterable. The trajectory toward violence and antisocial behavior patterns can be changed with appropriate preventative measures and early intervention.

Thus, although strategies are needed that address immediate safety concerns within schools, the emphasis needs to shift to prevention to the extent possible. Ultimately, to rid our schools of violence, society must find solutions to the root causes of violence.

School violence is a reflection of violence in the surrounding community; therefore, it cannot be solved by schools alone. Stemming the tide of violence requires a comprehensive, societal approach to prevention and intervention. All institutions, organizations and individuals must accept responsibility for their critical roles and should collaborate to find solutions. Responsibility lies with:

- **Governing boards**
  Governing boards have the broadest role in ensuring school safety. As the district visionaries, boards create the philosophical foundation that guides decisions and directs future actions. Through their governance role, boards adopt policies, programs and curricula that can contribute to safe environments for all students and staff and provide opportunities for activities centered around healthy student interactions. As community leaders, board members have the opportunity to advocate for comprehensive, community-wide efforts to reduce antisocial and violent behavior in ways that complement school efforts. And, as elected

trustees, boards are held accountable by the community for conditions within the schools.

- **School staff**
  School staff have a responsibility to protect students on campus, support community-school partnerships and assist in providing services to meet the needs of at-risk and violent youth and their families. Staff also have a responsibility to create and sustain an atmosphere that invites mutual respect, provides support and comfort, and engages students in positive cocurricular activities.

The implementation of school safety strategies is the responsibility of all staff — certificated and classified. The superintendent works with the board in its policy and oversight functions; he/she also develops administrative regulations, programs and curricula to support district policies. School staff develop site safety plans, intervention and alternative discipline strategies, codes of conduct and parental supports that complement district plans while meeting the unique needs of individual sites.

**"Students have a right and a duty to be involved in the prevention and reduction of school violence."**

*— S. Kadel & J. Follman, 1993*

- **Parents**
  Parents have a responsibility to guide the behavior of their children. Through their guidance and example, children learn acceptable behaviors and how to negotiate conflict. Parents also have a responsibility to support the safety efforts in their schools and communities by encouraging adherence to school rules and modeling the behaviors expected of their children. In the event of disciplinary actions, parents should work with their child, school administrators, teachers and counselors to resolve behavior problems and, if the child is expelled, to follow the steps necessary for reinstatement to the regular school environment.

- **The community**
  The unsafe conditions and unacceptable behavior observed on school campuses are by and large products of the complex conditions within the larger community. Although schools should be using proactive strategies to increase school safety and provide positive activities for youth, they cannot reverse the trend toward increased youth violence on their own. Identifying and implementing solutions to the social problems that affect our youth require collaboration at all levels among the schools, local law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, mental-health agencies,

## Every day in America:

- **13 children are homicide victims**
- **8,470 children are reported abused or neglected**
- **5,753 children are arrested**
- **280 children are arrested for violent crimes**

***— Children's Defense Fund, 1998***

community organizations, other agencies and individual community members. Community solutions are necessary to address community violence.

- **State and federal leaders**
  State and federal governments provide funding to schools and offer a variety of grant programs designed to support local school safety efforts. They pass laws and regulations that impact the actions of law enforcement agencies, courts, correctional facilities, schools and other agencies attempting to prevent school violence, and they establish consequences for criminal behavior. Frequently they serve as clearinghouses for information about successful practices. Through all these roles, state and federal leaders can demonstrate a strong commitment to school safety while providing sufficient flexibility to allow school districts and communities to determine how best to invest and allocate resources to maximize school safety.

- **The media, businesses and entertainers**
  Violence in movies, television, video games, music, sports, and other entertainment/news vehicles is often cited as a factor contributing to school violence. Persons involved in developing entertainment for youth can help by presenting positive role models rather than glorifying or rewarding violence.

- **Students**
  Students have a responsibility to participate in making schools safe. Adhering to school rules, respecting the rights of others, using nonviolent solutions to conflict and reporting dangerous or illegal acts to school staff are critical components that students must contribute in order for school campuses to remain safe.

# 2. Assessment of the Problem



## How Safe Are Our Schools?

**"For many, many kids, schools continue to be the safest places they can be. But that sense of safety has been rocked."**

***—Richard Lieberman,*** *Crisis Specialty Group for the California Association of School Psychologists*

### The public perception

The widespread perception today is that school crime and violence are pervasive problems. A 1994 survey conducted by Public Agenda found that parents do not believe most schools are providing a safe, orderly environment conducive to learning; 72 percent of the parents surveyed said that "drugs and violence" are serious problems in the schools in their area.

A survey conducted by Metropolitan Life (Louis Harris & Associates, 1994) found that teachers' perceptions of the level of violence were affected by the degree to which schools were believed to be providing an adequate education (see Table 1). The majority of teachers felt that the level of school violence had stayed about the same during the past year. However, 43 percent of the teachers who felt that their school provided a fair or poor education believed that violence had increased; of those who felt the quality of education was excellent or good, only 12 percent and 22 percent, respectively, perceived an increase in violence. The survey further found that 44 percent of the law enforcement officials surveyed perceived an increase in school violence, far above both teachers (19 percent) and students (15 percent).

Do the facts support the perception of pervasive school violence? Even with the reporting and methodological problems inherent in gathering information on crime, reports of school crime indicate that the popular perception is at least partially incorrect.

### The national picture

Despite a few extreme acts of school violence across the nation, most schools are safe. In fact, "a child is more likely to be a victim of a violent crime in the community or at home than at school" (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). In 1996, incidents of

nonfatal serious violent crime (e.g., rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault) among students age 12 through 18 occurred about 255,000 times at school but about 671,000 times away from school (Kaufman et al., 1998).

National data show a decline in school crime and a reduction in the number of guns being carried to school in recent years. Annual reports on school crime and safety prepared by the National Center for Education Statistics and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Kaufman et al., 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 1998) found that:

- Between 1993 and 1996, the overall school crime rate for students age 12 to 18 declined from about 16.4 percent to 12.8 percent.
- During the 1996-97 school year, the vast majority of crimes reported to law enforcement by public schools (402,000 out of 424,000 total crimes reported) were of the less serious or violent types (e.g., physical attack or fight without a weapon, theft/larceny, vandalism).
- The nature of crime outside of school is far more serious than in school. About 26 of every 1,000 students ages 12 to 18 (2.6 percent) were victims of serious violent crimes away from school, while 10 of every 1,000 (1.0 percent)

**Table 1 — Perceived Change in the Level of Violence**

**QUESTION:** *In the past year, has the level of violence at your school increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?*

| | | TEACHERS | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | QUALITY OF EDUCATION | | | MINORITY STUDENTS | | | LOWER INCOME STUDENTS | | |
| | TOTAL TEACHERS | EXCELLENT | GOOD | FAIR OR POOR | ALL OR MANY | SOME | FEW OR NONE | ALL OR MANY | SOME | FEW OR NONE |
| | PERCENTAGE | | | | | | | | | |
| Increased | 19 | 12 | 22 | 43 | 25 | 20 | 13 | 24 | 17 | 12 |
| Decreased | 11 | 11 | 11 | 5 | 13 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 10 | 8 |
| Stayed About the Same | 70 | 75 | 66 | 52 | 62 | 69 | 77 | 64 | 73 | 78 |
| Not Sure | 1 | 1 | 1 | – | 1 | 1 | * | * | 1 | 2 |
| **BASE** | **1000** | **494** | **446** | **61** | **316** | **273** | **410** | **398** | **416** | **175** |

*Source: Louis Harris & Associates, 1994*



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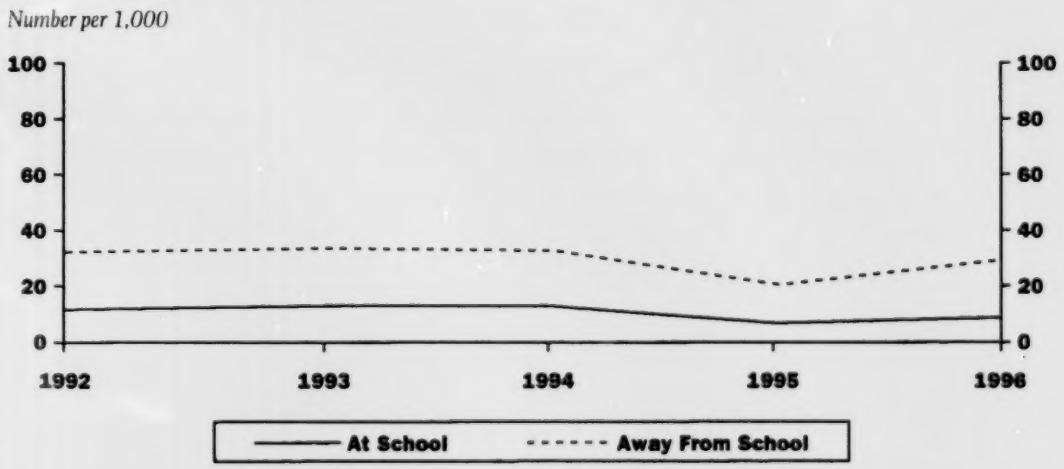
were victims of serious violent crimes at school or going to and from school (see Figure 1).

- From 1993 to 1996, the percentage of high school seniors who reported carrying a weapon to school on at least one day within the previous four weeks declined from 8 percent to 6 percent (see Figure 2); about 3 percent were guns. The percentage of male students carrying weapons declined from 14 percent to 9 percent.
- The percentage of 12th graders who have been injured with or without a weapon at school has not changed notably over the past 20 years. The rate of intentional injuries with a weapon was about 5 percent in 1996.
- During 1992 and 1993 combined, 7,357 children age 5 through 19 were murdered in this country, 63 (less than 1 percent) of them on school property, on the way to or from school or while attending or traveling to or from an official school-sponsored event. Unfortunately, the number of multiple-victim homicide events at schools



**Figure 1 — Number of Serious Violent Crimes Nationally Against Students Ages 12 Through 18 Per 1,000 Students**



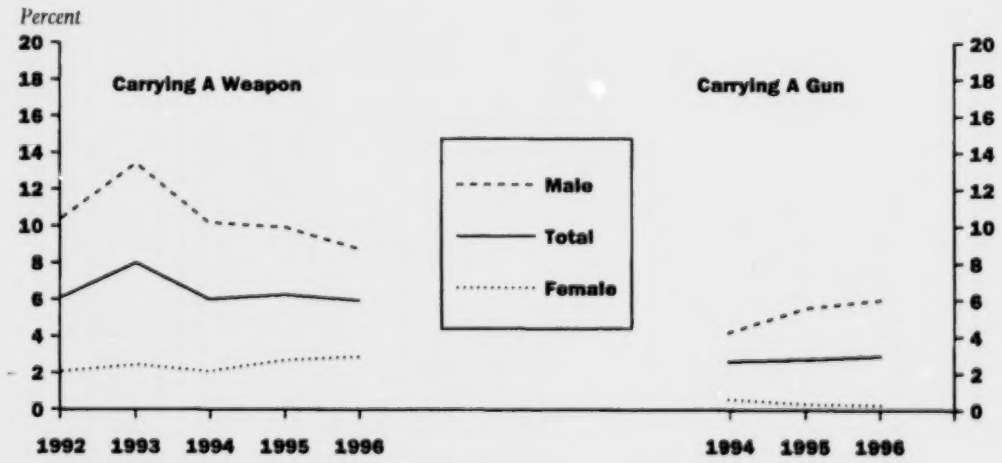

*NOTE: Serious violent crimes include rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. "At School" includes on school property or on the way to or from school.*

*U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1992 to 1996.*

increased from 2 in 1992-93 to 6 in 1997-98, and the number of victims in these events increased from 4 to 16.

- Most school crime (62 percent) is theft.
- Students in high schools and middle schools were more vulnerable to crime, and crime of a more serious nature, than students in elementary schools.
- Schools in cities and urban fringe areas were more likely to report at least one serious violent crime than those in towns and rural areas (17 percent of city schools, 11 percent of urban fringe schools, 8 percent of rural schools and 5 percent of schools in towns).
- The presence of street gangs and drugs is related to increased school crime and victimization of students. The percentage of students reporting that gangs were present at their schools increased from 15percent to 28 percent between 1989 and 1995. In addition, students reporting that they had been the victim of a violent crime at school were also more likely to report that drugs were available at school (73 percent compared to 65 percent who reported that they had not been violently victimized at school).

**Figure 2 — Percentage of 12th Graders in the Nation Who Reported Carrying a Weapon or Gun to School at Least One Day in the Past Four Weeks**




*NOTE: Examples of weapons are knives, guns, and clubs. "To School" was not defined for the questionnaire respondent. Response rates for this survey do not meet NCES standards.*

*University of Michigan, Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, Monitoring the Future Study, 1992 to 1996.*

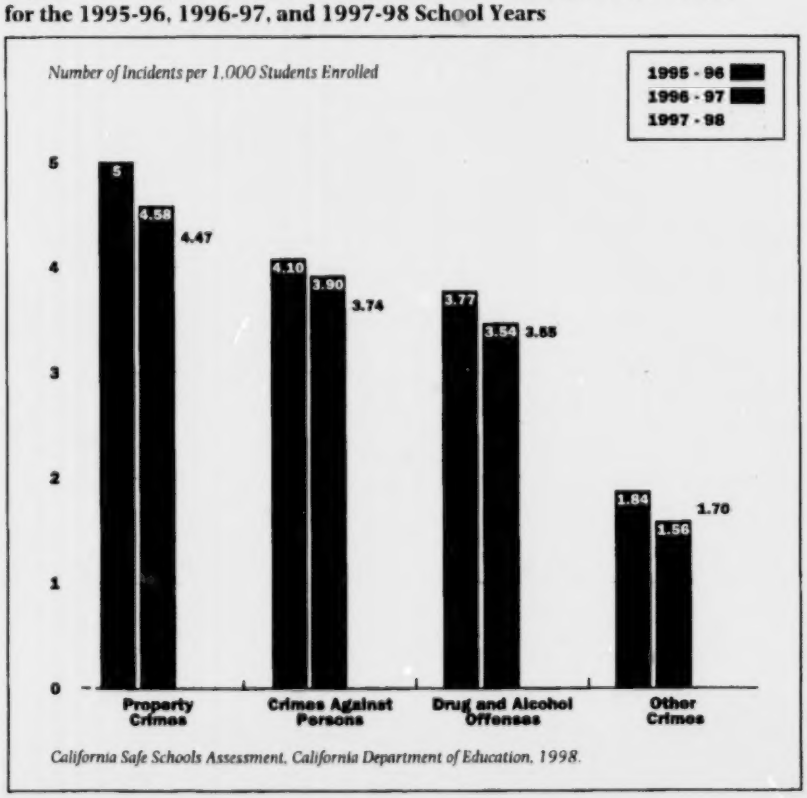
The vast majority of students say they feel safe at school, although fear seems to be growing. The percentage of students age 12 through 19 who feared they were going to be attacked or harmed at school increased from 6 percent in 1989 to 9 percent in 1995. The percentage of students who avoided one or more places at school for fear of their own safety increased from 5 to 9 percent.

A 1997 survey of 16,262 students conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that Latino students (7.2 percent) and African American students (6.8 percent) were more likely than white students (2.4 percent) to have felt unsafe. Also, students in grade 9 were more likely than students in grade 12 to have felt unsafe (5.5 percent and 2.5 percent, respectively).

***School violence in California***. School crime data in California have been reported since July 1995 through the California Safe Schools Assessment (CSSA). A comparison of 1997-98 data with the previous two years (California Department of Education, 1998) showed a decline in both property crimes and crimes against persons (see Figure 3), although property crimes remained the most common type of crime (33 percent of all reported crimes).



**Figure 3 — Analysis of School Crime Trends for California Public Schools for the 1995-96, 1996-97, and 1997-98 School Years**




*California Safe Schools Assessment, California Department of Education, 1998.*



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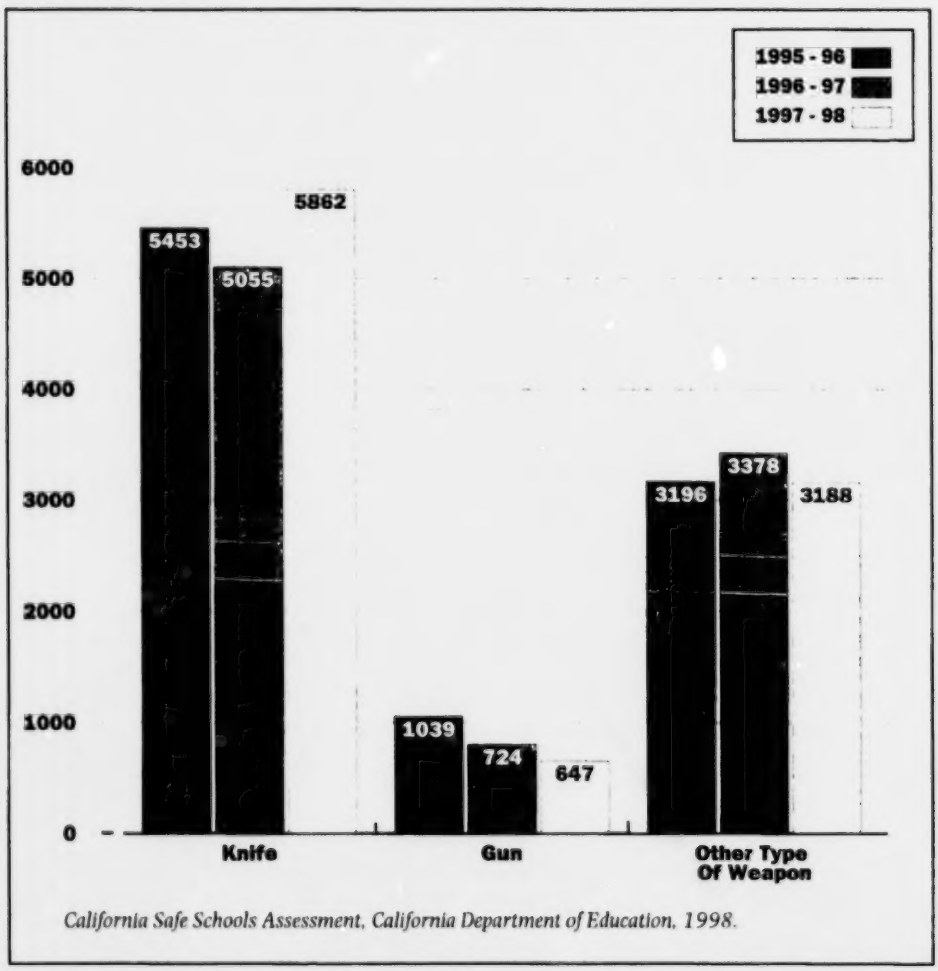
In addition, the CSSA found:

- There was an 11 percent reduction in the number of guns confiscated on school campuses between 1996-97 and 1997-98 (from 724 to 647) and a 38 percent reduction over the three years (1,039 in 1995-96). However, the possession of knives increased 16 percent in one year (up to 5,862) (see Figure 4).
- The incidence of crimes against persons was substantially higher in the middle and junior high school grades and in county office of education programs than in elementary and high schools. Over three years, crimes against persons

**Figure 4 — Breakdown of Weapons Reported in California for the 1995-96, 1996-97, and 1997-98 School Years**




*California Safe Schools Assessment, California Department of Education, 1998.*

remained fairly constant at the middle/junior high school level while decreasing at the high school level and increasing at the elementary level.

- Of crimes against persons, robbery/extortion decreased by 22 percent over three years and battery decreased by 9 percent. Assault with a deadly weapon increased by 6 percent.
- In 1997-98, drugs or alcohol was involved in only 1 percent of crimes against persons, property crimes or other non-drug and alcohol offenses.
- Weapons involvement in drug/alcohol offenses and property crimes was negligible (1 percent or less).
- Most suspects involved in school crime (82 percent) were male. Most victims (69 percent) also were male, and 88 percent of the victims were students.

The California Department of Education cautioned against drawing conclusions based on the percentage of change between years. The percentage of change may be overemphasized because the crime rates are very small (most are less than 0.5 per 1,000 students).

***Conclusion: Perception vs. reality.*** Although any violence in schools cannot be tolerated, the general public's perception seems to be more negative than the reality. Public opinion regarding school violence is shaped by the media, the public's general attitudes toward its neighborhood schools, deep concern about and fear of crime and violence in the community, deliberate attempts to mislead the public by those who seek to undermine public education and other factors.

Unfortunately, once the public accepts the notion that schools are unsafe, information supporting this view is easily passed along with little investigation of the accuracy. One example was a comparative list of major school concerns in 1940 and 1990 that was widely cited by major news columnists and education leaders. The list of concerns for 1940 included talking, chewing gum, running in the halls, and so on, while the list for 1990 listed drug and alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery and assault. Yet, when Yale University professor Barry O'Neill (1994) conducted an extensive search to find the source of the list, he found it was fictitious. Cautioning policy makers, he suggested the reason the list met with such uncritical acceptance was because it conformed to popular beliefs concerning

today's youth and public schools. Care should be taken, he noted, not to allow misinformation to guide policy decisions (O'Neill, 1995).

### Effects of School Violence

When violence occurs in schools, everyone feels vulnerable. It impacts students, staff, parents and the community.

Obviously, governing boards are concerned about all the conditions of children that interfere with their education, including actual physical harm resulting from violence. *Fear* of physical harm also has a negative academic and psychological impact on students. The fear of victimization is often implicated as one of the reasons for irregular school attendance. One in 12 dropouts reported fear of other students as the reason for dropping out of school (Greenbaum, Turner & Stephens, 1989). A 1997 nationwide survey found that 4 percent of the students missed one or more days of school in the 30 days preceding the survey because they felt unsafe at school or traveling to or from school (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997).

Fear causes students to restrict their movements, avoiding certain areas of the school grounds, hallways or restrooms. When in class, students may be unable to fully concentrate on classwork. Emotional and physical energy that could be more usefully applied toward academics is instead consumed by worries over isolation and vulnerability to an attack (Greenbaum, Turner & Stephens, 1989). When violent incidents occur, even students who are not directly involved in the violence are affected; they feel a sense of powerlessness and anxiety over how to protect themselves from similar victimization. When parents or other adults are unable to provide a sense of safety, children feel abandoned and angry. They may come to believe that aggression and violence on their part are the only recourse for self-protection (Prothrow-Stith, 1991).

Students are not the only ones who fear school violence. Staff are also at risk and must cope with the effects of school-related violence. A 1987 U.S. Department of Education survey (cited in Schmelynski, 1993) found that 29 percent of teachers had considered leaving the profession because of violence and intimidation. In the 1993-94 school year, 12 percent of all elementary and secondary school teachers (341,000) were threatened with injury by a student, and 4 percent (120,000) were physically attacked by a student (Kaufman et al., 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Just as students have difficulty concentrating on the task of learning in schools

perceived as violent, teachers have difficulty teaching. Disruptive behavior in a classroom interferes with instructional time. Student belligerence combined with increasing intimidation from students and their parents may restrict teachers' ability to provide appropriate discipline.

Furthermore, school-related violence has a profound effect on parents and the greater community. Parents want their children to be safe and feel responsible for protecting them from harm. Typical responses by parents to violence at schools include anger toward the adults at the school and feelings of personal failure. These responses are often followed by demands to institute more stringent rules and suspension or expulsion policies. The end result has been a deterioration in the confidence parents and community members have in schools.

It is because of all these insidious effects that the prevention of school violence has become a top priority in our communities and schools. Effective teaching and learning can occur only in an atmosphere where students and staff feel safe.

# 3. Contributing Factors and Early Warning Signs

When violence occurs at schools, it is common to ask ourselves what might have been done to prevent the incident, whether there were "signals" that should have provided clues that it was about to happen. Research has identified a number of factors that appear to contribute to violent behavior and some early warning signs that might enable educators, families, friends and agencies to get help for an individual before it is too late.

## What Causes Violent Behavior?

Although there are no definitive answers as to why people become violent, experts agree that both biological and societal factors are at work. According to the 1993 report of the American Psychological Association (APA) Commission on Violence and Youth, the primary risk factor that leads to an individual's involvement in violence is a history of violence: "Although the form and the absolute level of an individual's aggression varies considerably throughout the lifespan, an individual's relative level of aggression among age-mates shows remarkable continuity and predictability over time" (p. 17). The APA is also quick to note, however, that it is the interaction of a variety of factors that contributes to this consistency, many of which are alterable.

Among the factors cited by research as contributing to violent behavior are biological factors, emotional and cognitive development, family and childrearing conditions, relations to peers, effects of poverty, prejudice and discrimination, social acceptability for violent behavior, alcohol and drug use, and factors in the school environment.

### Biological factors

Inherited traits such as temperament, activity levels and hormonal levels may interact with the social environment in ways that encourage aggressive behaviors and responses (APA, 1993). Some theorize that an impulsive, difficult temperament may overlap with

a fearless temperament, and when combined with other factors may build a base for later violent behavior. According to Hunt (1993), neurobiological deficits are often present in aggressive children and adolescents. Of those who commit murder, Hunt states, many are cognitively limited (IQs between 70 and 90); many have language deficits; and a large percentage have abnormal brain function (measured by EEGs) or mild abnormalities in physical appearance, muscle coordination and reflexes. For females the development of violence may be somewhat different due to biological and sex role socialization differences (APA, 1993).

### Emotional and cognitive development

Lack of impulse control, as well as conditioned responses to anger, play a key role in antisocial or violent behavior. However, research suggests that inadequate control will not put an individual at risk for violent behavior unless aggressive and violent responses have produced past rewards and have become the individual's preferred response (APA, 1993). Much attention has been given to this area of inquiry recently in response to the growth in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) diagnoses and the potential relationship to violence. Recent research suggests that while most children with ADHD do not develop violent behavior, the cognitive handicaps experienced by some ADHD individuals may inhibit their learning of prosocial skills and moral concepts (APA, 1993).

### Family and childrearing conditions

Abusive, neglectful and ineffective parenting are some of the strongest precursors to later violent behavior in both children and adults. As the APA (1993) suggests, "Criminal history or antisocial personality in a parent, parental rejection of the child, and inconsistent and physically abusive parental discipline all seem to contribute to early aggressive behaviors. . . . Abuse at the hands of parents leads children to think and solve problems in ways that later lead to their developing aggressive behavior patterns and to their continuing the cycle of violence" (p. 19).

Prothrow-Stith (1991) explains the negative role parents may, often inadvertently, play in fostering violent behavior: "[Parents] feel so overwhelmed by their own problems — money problems, work problems, marital problems, problems with drugs and alcohol — that they do not pay a great deal of attention to their children. . . . This apparent indifference is punctuated by episodes of verbal and physical lashing out . . . Parents fail to notice and praise what their children do right. . . . Violence may be the only way in which parents address their children" (p. 154).

The changing composition of the family is also causing concern to educators and other professionals studying youth violence. Many children are being raised in single-parent and dual-earner households where child care is a necessary but sometimes unaffordable expense. Situations such as this leave many children without adequate supervision or contact with positive adult role models. According to the 2,000 school districts surveyed by the National School Boards Association (1994), 84 percent of urban districts, 77 percent of suburban districts and 73 percent of rural districts attribute "changing family situations" as a primary cause for increasing violence.

Conversely, positive parental and adult interactions may serve as protective factors and foster resiliency in spite of other negative conditions.

**Relation to peers**

Peers play an important role in children's lives and can impact a child's level of aggression and susceptibility to violence.

In the early years, children who are disruptive in class and display antisocial behavior not only do poorly academically, but the behavior often affects their ability to develop normal peer relations. Aggressive children tend to be rejected by their peers; those peer relationships they do form tend to be with others like themselves, thus reinforcing their antisocial behaviors. Without intervention, those early failures in the academic and social environment may undermine the development of healthy self-esteem and propel an antisocial child into further negative behavior. This pattern contributes to a process in which the expectations and negative reinforcement of teachers play a part in destroying the enthusiasm for school, particularly for African American males (APA, 1993; Walker, 1993).

Later, during adolescence, peers have an even greater impact on behavior. Developmentally, adolescents have two outstanding characteristics: (1) they strive for uniqueness while at the same time need to feel part of a group; and (2) peers are often the most important people in their lives — behavior is modeled after them and acceptance from them is sought. These two aspects of adolescence are prominent factors in gang involvement, antisocial acts and substance abuse.

Gang membership entices only a small percentage of youth but is cause for great concern. Admittance to a gang typically requires the youth to commit a violent act and to undergo physical assault by other members. Youth involved with gangs are three times more likely to commit homicide and aggravated assault than are non-gang delinquents (APA, 1993).

According to the APA and to Felger (1992), youth who join gangs are predominantly male minorities living in environments where poverty, unemployment and social inequalities are part of everyday life and where gang membership is often seen as the only option available for gaining status, power, self-esteem and economic advancement.

Gangs also provide youth with a sense of belonging and purpose, and a loyal group of friends. In many ways gangs become a surrogate family, establishing values, codes of conduct and boundaries and providing a loyal group ready to protect and defend each individual. Once a youth becomes involved in a gang, the consequences of breaking the unwritten codes of loyalty can make detachment difficult and dangerous.

**"You know when you're in the gang it'll never be boring. You're always doing something, you're active, you know. It's fun when you're with a lot of people, and people see it."**

***— Bentz,***
*14-year-old gang member, cited in Felger, 1992*

The incidence of gang involvement is much lower for females, but the likelihood of violence is equally high. For females, gang violence is often both physical and sexual. Female gangs are most often formed as adjuncts to male gangs, with the clear expectation that female members will be sexually available to all male members at their request (Marinucci, Winokur & Lewis, 1994).

### Effects of poverty

Approximately one out of four children in America and in California lives in poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 1998). To grow up poor increasingly means to grow up living in substandard housing in violent neighborhoods and to perceive one's neighbors as unable to escape from their current socioeconomic niche. Through the emphasis placed on material possessions in our culture, children soon become aware not only of their economic deprivation, but also of their relative deprivation (how poor they are in comparison to others). Repeated frustrations, rejection and apparent lack of opportunity over long periods of time can foster the perception that the world is a hostile place. This "cycle of disadvantage" breeds the violence, frustration and anger prevalent among those who are poor, regardless of race. Those who experience the world as hostile and uncaring soon learn to respond with aggression (Kadel & Follman, 1993).

### Prejudice and discrimination

It is only relatively recently that discrimination has been illegal in the United States and penalties imposed for violence against minority groups. The memories and the bias that the past policies of discrimination have engendered are not quickly changed. As the APA (1993) states, "Though many discriminatory laws have been challenged and overturned, others still remain. . . . But even for

those that have been overturned, the legacy of fear, hate and pain remains" (p. 25). Furthermore, recent years have seen the resurgence of "hate groups" who target individuals for verbal or physical violence because of their ethnicity, sexual orientation or other characteristics.

Consequently, one of the most pervasive conditions contributing to violence today is prejudice — the belief that one group is not entitled to equal treatment and conditions. "Prejudice and discrimination are not a thing of the past. . . . [S]uch discrimination fosters vast differences in economic status. . . . [I]t also damages the self-confidence and self-esteem of those discriminated against and lays a foundation for anger, discontent, and violence" (APA, 1993, p. 25).

**"Socially disorganized, crime-ridden neighborhoods produce socially disorganized, crime-ridden schools."**

***— J. Menacker, W. Weldon, & E. Hurwitz, 1990***

**Social acceptability of violent behavior**

The degree to which violence is perceived as acceptable or is rewarded within a society or a specific culture plays a substantial role in the development of violent behavior. For example, surveys often cite media violence as a major factor contributing to school violence. The national survey conducted by Metropolitan Life (Louis Harris & Associates, 1994) found that 55 percent of teachers and 60 percent of law enforcement officials believed that violence in the mass media is a "major" factor contributing to violence in the schools. These percentages rose even higher in urban areas (66 percent of urban teachers and 65 percent of urban law enforcement officials). A National School Boards Association (1994) survey of school districts found similar results: 60 percent of the districts cited media violence as a leading cause of violence in schools. Adding to these opinion surveys are data estimating that children view more than 8,000 murders and hundreds of thousands of acts of violence on television by the time they leave eighth grade (Sautter, 1995). Video games, computer software and interactive video, song lyrics, comic books and movies also appear to be more graphic and violent.

In addition, acceptance of violence is evident through society's choice of heroes and legends, passion for violent sports and the easy availability of weapons (APA, 1993). The APA notes that "violence is woven into the cultural fabric of American society. . . . [O]ur folk heroes and media images . . . often glorify interpersonal violence on an individual and personal level. . ." (p. 22).

**Use of alcohol and drugs**

Violence and drug use are integrally related (APA, 1993). Alcohol and other drugs dull inhibitions that prevent people from acting on violent impulses. Once addicted, adolescents, like adults, may engage in violent activity to ensure a continuous supply. Just

as in any other illegal activity involving large sums of money, drug trafficking and distribution are dangerous and violent. Disputes over drug sales, territory and supplies are often the impetus for youth violence and gang warfare.

**"Some widely believed attitudes about bullies must be altered or abandoned. Part of the *normal* growing-up process does not include kids abusing kids or setting up their own hierarchy based on the strong victimizing the weak. In addition, the common belief that one sure remedy for bullying is for the victim to physically fight back must be exposed as a myth."**

*— S. Greenbaum, B. Turner, & R. D. Stephens, 1989*

### Negative school environment

Certain aspects of the school environment may increase tension among students and between students and staff which can lead to verbal and physical conflict (Greenbaum, Turner & Stephens, 1989). For instance, large school populations and/or overcrowding may promote student feelings of danger, decreased control over situations and increased anonymity. In addition, if incidents of harassment or bullying are excused or tacitly condoned, these behaviors create a hostile environment and make the school an intimidating, frightening place.

A task force on student discipline found that academic promotion, grading or school policies that are viewed as inconsistent and unfair may also contribute to student hostility and anger, and that "embarrassment, frustration and anger over such policies can lead to further insubordination, non-compliance, and violence" (cited in Kadel & Follman, 1993, p. 59). While embarrassment and anger may be normal responses to academic failures, when consequences are applied unevenly the situation can be much more volatile. Lax or inconsistent school discipline policies may make the school the best place to commit a crime without receiving punishment.

Finally, schools without cocurricular activities that provide opportunities for healthy interactions and outlets for youthful energy, such as sports, clubs, art and music, may increase the levels of alienation students experience and seem less responsive to student needs.

## Early Warning Signs

Regardless of the *cause* of violent behavior, it may be possible in some cases to prevent violence by heeding certain warning signs and obtaining help for troubled individuals. A U.S. Department of Education report (Dwyer, Osher & Warger, 1998) reiterates the finding that "most children who become violent toward self or others feel rejected and psychologically victimized. In most cases, children exhibit aggressive behavior early in life and, if not provided support, will continue a progressive developmental pattern toward severe aggression or violence" (p. 8).

The authors caution against using checklists to diagnose and stereotype individual children. Early warning signs are useful, however, in referring children who may need help.

**These early warning signs include (Dwyer et al., 1998):**

- **Social withdrawal**
  Gradual and eventually complete withdrawal from social contacts often stems from feelings of depression, rejection, persecution, unworthiness and lack of confidence.
- **Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone**
  Although the majority of children who are isolated and appear to be friendless are not violent, research has shown that in some cases feelings of isolation are associated with children who behave aggressively and violently.
- **Excessive feelings of rejection**
  Without support, children who experience emotionally painful rejection may be at risk of expressing their emotional distress in negative ways, including violence. Some who are rejected by nonaggressive peers seek out aggressive friends who, in turn, reinforce their violent tendencies.
- **Victimization**
  Children who are victims of violence — including physical or sexual abuse — are sometimes at risk themselves of becoming violent towards themselves or others.
- **Feelings of being picked on and persecuted**
  Children who feel constantly picked on, teased, bullied, singled out for ridicule and humiliated at home or school may initially withdraw socially and, if not given adequate support, may vent their feelings in inappropriate ways.
- **Low school interest and poor academic performance**
  In some situations, when a low achiever feels frustrated, unworthy, chastised and denigrated, acting out and aggressive behaviors may occur.
- **Expression of violence in writings and drawings of children**
  Many children produce work about violent themes that for the most part is harmless when taken in context. However, an overrepresentation of violence in writings and drawings that is directed at specific individuals consistently over time, may signal emotional problems and the potential for violence.
- **Uncontrolled anger**
  Anger is a natural emotion, but anger that is expressed frequently and intensely to minor irritants may signal potential violent behavior.

**". . . it is important to avoid inappropriately labeling or stigmatizing individual students because they appear to fit a specific profile or set of early warning indicators. . . . A good rule of thumb is to assume that these warning signs, especially when they are presented in combination, indicate a need for further analysis to determine an appropriate intervention."**

***— K. Dwyer, D. Osher & C. Warger, 1998***

- **Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating and bullying behaviors**
  Some mildly aggressive behaviors that occur early in children's lives, if left unattended, might later escalate into more serious behaviors.

- **History of discipline problems**
  Chronic behavior and disciplinary problems both in school and at home may suggest that underlying emotional needs are not being met and may set the stage for the child to violate norms and rules, defy authority, disengage from school and engage in aggressive behaviors with other children and adults.

- **Past history of violent and aggressive behavior**
  Youth who show an early pattern of antisocial behavior (e.g., aggressive acts directed toward other individuals, cruelty to animals, fire setting, stealing, vandalism, lying, cheating) frequently and across multiple settings are particularly at risk for future aggressive behavior. Research suggests that the age of onset may be a key factor in interpreting early warning signs. For example, children who engage in aggression and drug abuse before age 12 are more likely to show violence later on than are children who begin such behavior at an older age.

- **Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes**
  An intense prejudice toward others based on race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, ability or physical appearance — when coupled with other factors — may lead to violent assaults against those who are perceived to be different.

- **Drug and alcohol use**
  Drug and alcohol use reduce self-control and expose children to violence as perpetrators and/or victims.

- **Affiliation with gangs**
  Youth who are influenced by gangs (including those who emulate their behavior as well as those who become affiliated with them) may adopt their antisocial values and behaviors and act in violent ways in certain situations.

- **Inappropriate access to, possession of and use of firearms**
  Children who inappropriately possess or have access to

firearms can have an increased risk for violence and a higher probability of becoming victims.

- **Serious threats of violence**
  One of the most reliable indicators that a youth is likely to commit a dangerous act is a detailed and specific threat to use violence. Recent incidents across the country clearly indicate that threats to commit violence should be taken very seriously.

It is common for children who are troubled to exhibit multiple signs. Even exhibiting numerous signs, however, does not mean that the situation is hopeless. The potential for violence can be reduced significantly when children have a positive, meaningful connection to an adult — whether it be at home, at school, or in the community.

**"When warning signs indicate that danger is imminent, safety must always be the first and foremost consideration. Action must be taken immediately."**

***— K. Dwyer, D. Osher & C. Warger, 1998***

## Imminent Warning Signs

Imminent warning signs indicate that a student is very close to behaving in a way that is potentially dangerous to self or others. Dwyer et al. (1998) explain that these signs are usually presented as a series of overt, serious, hostile behaviors or threats directed at peers, staff or other individuals. They are usually evident to more than one staff person as well as the child's family.

**Imminent warning signs may include (Dwyer et al., 1998):**

- **serious physical fighting with peers or family members;**
- **severe destruction of property;**
- **severe rage for seemingly minor reasons;**
- **detailed threats of lethal violence;**
- **possession and/or use of firearms and other weapons; and**
- **other self-injurious behaviors or threats of suicide.**

These situations demand immediate intervention by school authorities, law enforcement, child and family services, mental health services and/or parents, as appropriate.

# 4. The Board's Role in Prevention and Intervention of School Violence

In developing strategies for the prevention and intervention of school violence, it is important to adopt a comprehensive approach rather than trying to find a single "cure" or implementing a series of unconnected, piecemeal strategies. Multiple causes of school violence demand that schools have a repertoire of strategies. Such strategies should focus on prevention, but should also include strategies for intervening when an incident occurs and for dealing with the aftermath.

Decisions about school safety strategies must be tailored to the unique needs and resources of each community. It is appropriate that one district have as its top priority the employment of additional security personnel, while another district focuses on the development of a conflict resolution program. In providing districts with funding to support school safety, state and federal leaders should provide flexibility to allow individual districts to make their own decisions about the best use of those funds.

Districts should base their safety plans on an assessment of local needs and consider the facts about the extent and types of school violence. They should also build upon existing programs that have proven successful in their own district and in schools across the nation. Many excellent resources are available to help districts in their planning processes. Research on effective practices is available through national, state and local groups, and districts may share personal experiences with each other about what has worked or not worked for them.

The governing boards of school districts and county offices of education play critical roles in ensuring that the schools in their communities are safe for students and staff. Working with the superintendent as a governance team, the board provides leadership within the district and the community which is essential to the success of school safety strategies. Governing

**"If kids are not in a supportive environment, then schools and social systems must develop effective ways to compensate, even as other systems work to change the problematic conditions. What we cannot do is throw away any more generations of children as we 'wait and hope' for things to get better."**

*—M. J. Elias, 1995*

boards can enhance school safety through each of their key leverage points:

- **setting the vision for the school system;**
- **establishing the organizational structure to support this vision, including the adoption of policies, the budget and curriculum; judicial responsibilities; appointment of the superintendent; and collective bargaining;**
- **ensuring accountability of district programs and staff; and**
- **providing leadership within the community and engaging in advocacy on behalf of children and schools.**

Actions that governing boards may take within each of these areas are discussed below.

**"Governing boards set the vision for the local school system, establish the structure to support it and are the ones held accountable for the success or failure. One act of school violence can overshadow all the successes of a district; therefore, reducing violence must be a priority."**

***— Rebecca Sargent,***
*Chair of CSBA School Safety Task Force, 1995*

## Setting a Vision and Climate for Safe Schools

One of the ways a governing board can emphasize its priority on school safety is through the district's vision statement or mission and goals. A well-written vision statement is a document that proclaims, in broad terms, the board's goals and expectations for its students. Thus, it represents the philosophy by which the board will operate, the priorities of the board and the direction in which the district will move. The board can make a strong statement that recognizes the rights of students and staff to a safe campus and that conveys its commitment to support proactive approaches and early intervention to curb school violence. The vision statement may also communicate the district's desire to involve students, families, staff and the community in violence prevention at the school site.

It is important that the board invite broad input in the development of its vision statement. It is also important that all board members and the superintendent fully support the district's emphasis on school safety. This vision statement will drive everything else in the organization — the district's policies, budget, staff performance goals, staff training and other operations.

The board's expectations for safe schools, as reflected in its vision statement, contribute to a positive school climate. In addition, the goal of developing a school climate conducive to learning, safety and violence prevention should be carried over into the district's policies and programs. Each school should strive for a climate that provides students with a caring and nondiscriminatory learning environment in which they can feel safe and secure and are able to realize their full potential.

The board can also contribute to a positive school climate through

good "boardsmanship" — that is, through its own effective governance. A board that works well with its superintendent, demonstrates trust and respect for staff and the public, and is professional in its relations with each other builds support and confidence in the school system. This leads to a community that is involved in its schools and committed to doing its part to support school safety efforts.

Finally, because coordinated community efforts will be needed to reduce school and community violence, the board may also be involved in building a collective vision among all the stakeholders in the community (see "Encouraging Collaborative Approaches" later in this chapter). As community leaders, board members may take the initiative to call attention to these issues and encourage a collaborative approach to violence prevention and intervention. The board may work with the county supervisors, the city council, community-based organizations and others to assess the needs of the community and develop a commonly held vision of services for children and families.

**CTC Recommendations for Boards**

The Commission on Teacher Credentialing, in its 1995 report on school safety, recommended that governing boards enhance school safety by:

1. having a clearly stated policy addressing school violence;
2. having ongoing trainings for board members on changing demographics, community needs and problems, and the readiness of the district to address school violence;
3. including student representation on the board as formal, full-fledged voting members or at least as ex-officio members;
4. developing an ongoing mechanism that allows the board to obtain input from students on a broad range of issues, including school violence;
5. making the prevention and reduction of school violence a top priority;
6. revising the student discipline process where necessary to give site administrators support for repeat discipline cases by creating more alternative programs/sites to handle students who act aggressively on school campuses;
7. expanding mentor teacher programs and otherwise providing incentives for teachers;
8. considering requiring community service as part of the high school graduation requirements; and
9. promoting the California School/Law Enforcement Partnership Cadre [see Appendix] and facilitating efforts to increase collaboration between the cadre and local county and district education offices.

### Examples of Board Policies Promoting School Safety

*The California School Boards Association provides sample board policies and administrative regulations on such safety issues as:*

Alternative schools
At-risk students
Behavioral interventions for special education students
Bomb threats
Campus disturbances
Campus security
Community day school
Conduct
Conflict resolution
Continuation education
Crime data reporting
Criminal background check
Discipline
District police department
Dress and grooming
Emergencies and disaster preparedness plan
Employee safety
Employee security
Gangs
Guidance services
Hate-motivated behavior
Nondiscrimination/ harassment
Open/closed campus
Positive school climate
Privacy - student rights
Questioning and apprehension
Search and seizure
Sex offender notification
Sexual harassment
Student safety
Students expelled from other districts
Suspension and expulsion/ due process
Vandalism/theft/graffiti
Visitors/outsiders
Weapons and dangerous instruments
Youth services

## Adopting Policy

Governing boards lead through the development, adoption and monitoring of policies. This fundamental duty provides boards an opportunity to establish guidelines and direction that impact the safety of students and staff.

The policies that governing boards choose to adopt highlight their recognition of emerging or existing issues. They become the guide for action, stating what the board wants and why. Sound, well-thought-out board policies identify and define objectives and goals that coincide with the district's overall vision, with local community values, and with state and federal laws and regulations. Policies also provide stability and enhance communications among the board, district stakeholders and staff. Accompanying administrative regulations developed by the superintendent or his/her staff provide the procedures for implementing and enforcing the policy.

Together, the policies and administrative regulations serve as a strategy for anticipating and solving problems. Under ideal conditions, policy acts as a preventative measure and is in place before the relevant issue arises. Especially in the area of school safety, the importance of having a policy in place beforehand cannot be overstated.

Some of the more salient issues boards face today in terms of improving campus safety and reducing the level of violence will require a number of strategies. The board may adopt an overall policy on school safety as well as individual policies addressing specific aspects of school safety (e.g., discipline, suspension and expulsion, gang prevention education, sexual harassment). Other policies (e.g., parent involvement, absences and excuses, alcohol and other drugs, multicultural education, media relations, staff development, etc.) may also reference school safety or be used to promote and maintain school safety.

Thus, policies may support curriculum strategies or specific programs, promote positive school environments to counteract violence, encourage collaborative community efforts or address consequences of school violence. Some examples of areas in which policies may be developed include:

***Comprehensive safety plans.*** California law (Education Code 35294.6) required each school to adopt, by September 1998, a comprehensive school safety plan relevant to the needs and resources of each school site. Districts with 2,500 or fewer students had the option of developing a districtwide safety plan applicable to each school site. However, all districts may wish to consider developing both districtwide and school site safety plans. A comprehen-

sive safety plan ensures a coordinated approach to school safety rather than a variety of piecemeal approaches and programs.

Education Code 35294.1 requires that the districtwide or school safety plan include an assessment of the current status of school crime. It must also include appropriate strategies and programs that will provide or maintain a high level of school safety and address the school's procedures for complying with existing laws related to school safety. These include child abuse reporting procedures, routine and emergency disaster procedures, policies for suspension and expulsion, procedures to notify teachers of dangerous students, sexual harassment policies, any dress code prohibiting students from wearing gang-related apparel, safety procedures to and from school, school discipline rules, and procedures providing for a safe and orderly environment conducive to learning at the school.

A balanced, effective safety plan may also include strategies related to the development of a positive school climate, preventative discipline, curriculum that emphasizes prevention and alternatives to violence, parent involvement, prevention and intervention related to the sale or use of drugs and alcohol, collaboration with other local agencies and community organizations, assessment of the school's physical environment, crisis intervention, and staff training in violence prevention and intervention.

The National School Boards Association (1992) encouraged districts to develop safety plans and policies that focus on prevention, foster positive attitudes and behaviors about tolerance and diversity among all students and staff members, and include control-oriented strategies such as metal detectors and locker searches.

A crisis intervention plan is an essential component of an overall safety plan. A planned response can significantly reduce disruption during times of high stress. Crisis intervention plans should detail each person's responsibilities and expected actions in the event of a crisis; an evacuation plan and opportunities to practice the evacuation plan; methods for communicating with parents, law enforcement, district staff and the board; spokespersons who will communicate with the media; and follow-up procedures that may be required after the crisis has occurred, such as counseling.

***Zero tolerance.*** California's "zero tolerance" law (Education Code 48915) requires the superintendent to immediately suspend and recommend for expulsion any student who knowingly possesses or furnishes a firearm, brandishes a knife, sells a controlled substance at school or at a school activity, or commits or attempts to commit a sexual assault or sexual battery. Federal law (20 U.S.C. 8921) and Education Code 48916 require students to be expelled

for one year if found to have committed any of these offenses, although exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis.

At the local level, some boards have broadened zero tolerance grounds to include any type of weapon or drugs, or participation in a violent act (including hate crimes, harassment and discrimination) on campus or at school-sponsored events. The state Attorney General, however, has opined that a district may not adopt a zero tolerance policy which would call for automatic expulsion for the first offense involving possession of drugs or alcohol (80 *Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen.* 347, 1997), as such a policy would conflict with the legislature's determination that mandatory expulsion is for the most serious offenses listed in Education Code 48915(c).

Many communities view zero tolerance policies as the responsible route to safer schools. Such policies place as a top priority the removal of potentially dangerous students from school. They also ensure fair and equal treatment of all students. Others are concerned that such policies will unfairly punish some "good students" who may be carrying weapons out of fear or for some other sound reason and that students too young to understand the consequences of their behavior will be held to the same standards as older students.

Boards choosing to adopt a zero tolerance approach must be careful not to circumvent state or federal law. For example, the superintendent must consider individual circumstances when making a determination whether to recommend the student for expulsion. Boards also need to take appropriate steps to ensure that staff, students and parents are aware of the policy and that it will be strictly enforced. To accomplish this, some schools have held "violence awareness" assemblies or used parent and student contracts to explain the rationale behind the new rules and the consequences of violations.

Another issue that should be addressed by boards considering a zero tolerance policy is the level of evidence necessary to determine if a student has committed the prohibited act. With regards to firearms, state law requires the governing board to confirm, prior to expulsion, that an employee can verify the student's possession of the gun. If the policy is broadened to include behavior such as discrimination or harassment, this same requirement of employee verification might be added. In practice, verifying the possession of a weapon may be more clear cut and less subjective than verifying whether the student discriminated against or harassed someone. Therefore, it is recommended that districts consult with legal counsel before broadening a zero tolerance policy beyond state or federal mandates.

Finally, boards should consider what educational and related services will be provided to expelled students (see Chapter 5). Boards may place expelled students in community day schools or create other alternative programs. The board should determine whether the necessary resources are available to provide counseling and other support services. Without appropriate services, troubled students once expelled may be left with less supervision and little incentive or instruction to change their behaviors.

***Attendance and truancy.*** Consistent attendance is a key factor in student achievement, and irregular attendance is often the first indicator of other problems. Policies and procedures for determining excused absences are necessary for early identification of truant students, in addition to being required by law for funding purposes. Intervention to identify catalysts to the behavior and resolve the problems caused by excessive absences is an important component of school safety.

Many counties and districts have developed or participate in a Student Attendance and Review Board (SARB). SARBs are designed to identify factors contributing to the student's absences and resources to help reverse the behavior. A SARB must include (but is not limited to) a parent and representatives of the school district, county probation department, county superintendent, law enforcement, community-based youth service centers, school guidance personnel and child welfare and attendance personnel. SARBs often recommend and/or arrange tutoring, student or family counseling, parenting classes or assistance from a variety of community social services agencies. They may also use behavior and attendance contracts or other measures to encourage students and parents into compliance with state law and district rules.

***Gangs.*** Schools, as a part of the community, cannot expect to eliminate gang activity completely. However, they can make it much more difficult for gangs to display signs of affiliation, recruit members or engage in violent and illegal activities at the school site.

District policies can be developed that encourage regular communication between the schools and local law enforcement, promote preventative education and impede gang activities. Policies establishing communication links between law enforcement and schools enable districts to stay abreast of gang activities in the community and student gang involvement. Gang prevention education and early intervention beginning in elementary school can help counteract the gang recruitment efforts and influences in the larger community. This component is important for staff and parents as well. Adults must be able to identify signs of gang

involvement and respond appropriately to gang behavior.

Furthermore, districts can adopt policies on conduct, discipline or dress to inhibit gang activities. For instance, policies on conduct can be used to send clear signals about the expectations and boundaries for student group behavior. Conduct policies can also be used to emphasize tolerance and respect and to require student training and use of conflict resolution and mediation techniques. Disciplinary policies have been used in some districts to refer students for additional training in these techniques. For example, Portland Public Schools (Oregon) require that all students suspended for fighting, weapons possession or gang violence attend special classes on conflict resolution, mediation and nonviolence before returning to school.

California's school boards have the authority to approve plans initiated at school sites that prohibit students from wearing gang-related apparel (Education Code 35183). To enact a ban, school regulations must define "gang-related apparel" and limit this definition to apparel that could reasonably be determined to threaten the health and safety of the school environment. In addition, a federal district court [in *Marvin H. Jeglin et al v. San Jacinto Unified School District et al*, 827 F.Supp. 1459 (C.D. Cal. 1993)] held that, in order to justify a gang-related dress code, there must be evidence of a gang presence at a school and actual or threatened disruption or material interference with school activity. In general, schools should avoid banning clothing worn by the general student population (e.g., the colors red and blue) or the ban will be impossible to enforce.

If they determine that it is necessary for the health and safety of the students, boards may also approve site-initiated plans requiring the school's students to wear uniforms (Education Code 35183). However, state law requires that the policy provide a method for parents to exempt their children and the policy may not be implemented unless resources are available to assist economically disadvantaged students.

***Drugs and alcohol.*** Alcohol and other drugs often contribute to violence. Therefore, elimination of the illegal use and sale of drugs on campus or at school activities is essential to maintenance of a safe and constructive school environment. Policies should be adopted to reflect expectations for drug-free schools and outline the district responses. A comprehensive drug and alcohol abuse plan should contain policies on prevention, intervention, recovering student support and enforcement/discipline techniques.

As a last resort, boards have the authority to adopt random drug

testing of student athletes. Boards considering the adoption of such a policy should be aware that a recent Supreme Court case has upheld the rights of schools to do so under a narrow rationale of student safety [*Vernonia School District 47J v. Action, et al.* 515 U.S. —, 115 S.Ct. 2386 (1995)]. To institute such a program, boards should first ensure that evidence of drug use among students is present and other measures have been tried first. Also, the district must ensure students' privacy while upholding the validity of the testing. Finally, boards should consult legal counsel prior to adopting such a policy.

The successful reduction of student alcohol and other drug use is dependent upon the assistance and support of the entire community. Therefore, the board and superintendent should explore all possible avenues for cooperation and collaborative programs among parents, law enforcement and other community organizations. Boards should also ensure that preventative instruction complies with state law (Health and Safety Code 11999.2 and 11999.3, Education Code 51203 and 51260) and makes clear that alcohol use by minors is illegal and students should abstain from all use.

***Visitor registration.*** State law (Penal Code 627.2) requires certain types of visitors, defined as "outsiders" in the Penal Code, to register upon entering school premises. It appears that the district could require *all* visitors — including parents, board members or district employees, media representatives and others — to register upon entering school premises (Education Code 32212 and 35160). Limiting access to school grounds, posting notices informing visitors of the need to register in the principal's office and providing a visible means of identification for authorized visitors can reduce disruptions caused by people who have no legitimate reason to be on campus. A policy should be in place outlining access and the appeal procedure for outsiders who are denied access or are asked to leave school grounds.

**Adopting Curriculum**

The governing board has the authority and responsibility to adopt courses of study, curriculum guidelines and instructional materials for the district. Through this function it can emphasize curriculum that is relevant; provides students with a rich variety of subjects, experiences and opportunities to succeed; and prepares youth to become active community participants. Students who are engaged in school and who perceive the value of education for their future careers and personal goals will be less likely to act out or engage in violent behaviors.

In addition to ensuring the quality of the core educational program and the availability of interesting cocurricular and extracurricular activities, the board can adopt curricula that specifically support efforts to reduce violence and teach students constructive ways of dealing with their anger and frustration. The board can include in its expectations for youth an understanding of violence alternatives.

Examples of curricula that can build skills, values and understanding are curricula in conflict resolution, character/values education, multicultural education, service learning, social skills development, self-esteem development and media analysis skills.

**"Conflict is a normal, inevitable part of life, and learning to respond to conflict in a constructive manner is a fundamental aspect of every child's education."**

*— Sacramento County Office of Education, 1997*

***Conflict resolution and peer mediation.*** Many schools have established conflict resolution or conflict management programs to help students learn constructive approaches to settling disputes. These programs operate under the belief that reasonable verbal interaction between students will help prevent the escalation of violent behavior. Students learn that they have choices of behavior when a dispute arises and that it is within their own power to control these choices. Most of these programs include curriculum that helps children develop the means to resolve their own disputes effectively and peacefully, teacher training in the conflict resolution process, and training for selected students as peer mediators.

One approach is to train a small number of students to serve as peer mediators. This type of program is relatively easy to implement; however, having only a few peer mediators with limited training may not have as pervasive an effect on the number of conflicts on campus as a strategy that uses the entire student body through a rotation process (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). With this approach, every student learns how to manage conflicts constructively by negotiating agreements and mediating their peers' conflicts.

Another example of a curriculum that teaches dispute resolution is the "student court." Schools are allowed under Education Code 51220.2 to operate peer or teen court programs as part of the social sciences curriculum. Through these court programs, students learn about the American judicial system and the roles of key participants, as well as appropriate and effective dispute resolution procedures. Students are given opportunities to act in the various roles while presenting, defending and deliberating about real student offenses. The students committing the infractions have the opportunity to defend their actions and be judged by their peers. Although more time intensive, student courts may provide students with greater opportunities to impact the conditions at their schools; understand the principles of law, order and justice; and gain skills that will help them negotiate future conflicts.

***Character/values education.*** A values education encourages the development of traits that the governing board (as well as parents, teachers and members of the broader community) recognizes to be important for a child's personal and social development and future success.

Values taught at the school should be those that are recognized by the entire community as positive traits. They should not be based on a particular religious or ideological belief. Character traits and values that are usually universally accepted include honesty, personal responsibility, self-discipline, cooperation and respect for others. These are traits that would encourage nonviolent solutions to problems. Traits that are often thought to be universally accepted but may be problematic for some ethnic groups include individualism (some ethnic groups believe the interests of the family or community supersede the interests of the individual) and competition (in some cultures cooperation is emphasized) (Chang, Salazar & Leong, 1994).

**"Children learn prejudice easily, but they can unlearn it, too. That's where teaching is so vital. Teachers can turn incidents of prejudice into an opportunity to instruct and transform."**

***— E. B. Fleishman,*** *1995*

***Multicultural education, respect for cultural differences.*** Emphasizing multicultural understanding is an important element of an antiviolence curriculum because many conflicts that arise in schools stem from students' cultural differences. The diversity of the student population enriches the learning environment for all students and provides opportunities to learn about a variety of cultures. Schools should also work to unify students of all cultures and backgrounds, and to develop mutual respect and an understanding of shared experiences and values among students. In addition to communicating a message of inclusion, such a curriculum holds special value for "bridge" generations — immigrant children engaged in a tug of war between cultures and perspectives — going through a difficult process of sorting through what to retain and what to leave behind from their home culture (Olsen & Mullen, 1990).

***Service learning.*** Providing students with opportunities to connect with the community and discover their value and talents can positively impact the school climate and student interactions. Service opportunities within the community can give students from a variety of backgrounds and experiences the chance to interact. They may also provide disaffected, troubled students with a new purpose for continuing their education. Community service learning programs can promote students' recognition of their importance to others, improve self-esteem, strengthen positive values and improve learning by relating course work to real-life situations.

***Social skills development.*** Teaching social skills such as main-

taining self-control, building communication skills, forming friendships, resisting peer pressure, being appropriately assertive, forming positive relationships with adults and resolving conflict in nonviolent ways can provide students with appropriate standards of behavior, a sense of control and improved self-esteem (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 1993).

***Self-esteem development.*** Children's self-esteem — their beliefs that they are persons of worth, that their ideas are valuable and that they are important to the people in their community — is needed in order resist peer pressure and reject potentially harmful influences. Schools can begin to help children build self-esteem through positive programs that allow them to solve problems, gain confidence in their abilities and see themselves as important persons in the school community. Therefore, schools can help build self-esteem by utilizing curriculum that emphasizes problem solving, decision making, planning, goal setting and helping others (Benard, 1991). School staff also play an integral role in a child's self-esteem development through their actions. Staff can provide support and encouragement, demonstrate a respect for all people and create an environment which rewards individual growth and community participation.

**"The antidote to aggression and hedonism is to get students hooked on helping."**

*— L. Brentro & N. Long, 1995*

***Media analysis skills.*** With violence in the media thought to be a contributing factor to violence in our society, it is important that students be taught critical viewing and listening skills. Media analysis skills help students to recognize stereotypes, distinguish fact from fantasy and identify differences in behavior and values that conflict with their own. The ability to conceive of alternative solutions and nonviolent ways of resolving problems is a higher level thinking skill that can help a student understand the manipulative effect that mass media have on shaping a view of the larger world (Sweet & Singh, 1994).

## Allocating Resources

Although not all school safety strategies require additional expenditures, many do. State, federal and local policymakers must make a sufficient and ongoing fiscal commitment to keep schools safe. In doing so, not all funds should be earmarked for specific programs; districts and schools need flexibility to determine the best use of funds for their unique needs.

Because funds are rarely available to support all the things boards need to do, and would like to do, boards must weigh the benefits and costs of competing needs. Although the budget is prepared by staff, the board has a responsibility to ensure that the

budget it adopts reflects the goals and priorities set forth in its vision. If school safety is a priority of the board, funds must be allocated to support related programs and activities.

The board can also direct staff to explore state, national and private funding sources for school safety. A number of foundation and government grants are available to support school safety programs; it is possible that grants for coordinated services programs may also be used to support collaborative community efforts to reduce violence.

### Serving as a Judicial and Appeals Body

The governing board is usually the final arbiter of disputes within the district. Thus, when students are considered for suspension and expulsion, the board serves as a judicial and appeals body.

When dealing with safety issues, boards have the difficult task of balancing two crucial functions of public education: maintaining a safe and healthy school environment, and meeting the needs of at-risk and violent youth. Essential to a fair and effective judicial and appeals process, given these competing objectives, is a reliable framework of policies. Clear policies provide stability during the judicial and appeals procedures, while guiding the school staff, parents and students through the process.

To engender respect by students and parents for the board's authority in discipline matters and to ensure protection of students' rights, the board's policies should contain a section on students' rights and responsibilities. Student due process rights are mandated through the Education Code; it is essential that boards understand these rights and that discipline procedures are in full compliance.

Education Code Sections 48900-48930 mandate the due process a student is entitled to receive when confronted with suspension or expulsion. Due process rights include, but are not limited to:

1. written notice of the alleged rule broken and a copy of the rule;
2. written notice of the scheduled hearing procedure;
3. written notice of the right to present his/her side of the story, to inspect and present evidence, and to question witnesses;
4. written notice of the right to have legal counsel present; and
5. written notice of the right, in some circumstances, to appeal the board's decision.

When constitutional or procedural questions arise concerning disciplinary matters, the board should consult its legal counsel on all aspects of policy and procedure.

**"Whether kids receive the message from Hollywood or from real life, our society must stop advancing the false notion that the only way to fight violence is by using more violence. Telling a child to hit back gives the victim the distorted signal that it is his or her problem only, that no one cares enough to help, and that parents and school staff absolve themselves of the difficulty. The victim must not be left standing alone with the burden of resolving the problem."**

*— S. Greenbaum, B. Turner, & R. D. Stephens, 1989*

There are several typical judicial proceedings for which the board is the appellate body. These proceedings usually deal with complicated issues that have not been resolved through classroom, school site or district procedures, and after other alternatives have failed. In some cases, these proceedings are initiated in response to state and federal laws which require immediate suspension and a recommendation for expulsion of students under certain circumstances. Thus, the board's discretion in these cases is limited by state and federal law and may also be limited by any zero tolerance policy it may have adopted in its own district.

***Suspension hearings.*** Along with the teacher, principal and superintendent, the board has the authority to suspend students. Suspensions by the board usually occur when the behavior has been continuous and suspensions by other parties have failed to correct the behavior.

Education Code 48911 provides strict limits on the number of days a student may be suspended by the board and requires that students and parents be given proper notice. In order to protect the student's privacy, the suspension hearing must be conducted in a closed hearing, unless the student or parent requests that the hearing be open.

***Expulsion hearings.*** Education Code 48918 requires that the board establish rules and regulations governing procedures for the expulsion of students. The law governing expulsion hearings is detailed, complex and often confusing. Thus, the importance of having clear policies and procedures in this area cannot be overemphasized.

State law mandates timelines, procedures for student due process and requirements for conduct that must be strictly enforced. In addition, state law gives governing boards, hearing officers or administrative panels the power to subpoena parents or witnesses with information relevant to an expulsion decision. Board deliberations are held in a closed session, but the decision to expel is made public. In addition, a student expelled by a local district has the right to appeal the decision to the county board of education.

***Administrative hearings.*** Instead of conducting the hearing themselves, many boards contract with administrative hearing officers. These officers conduct a hearing, conforming to the same due process procedures that apply to the board, and then determine whether to recommend expulsion of the student to the board.

As an alternative to a hearing officer, the board may also consider appointing an impartial administrative panel to conduct the hearing. This panel is composed of certificated personnel who are not members of the staff where the student is enrolled. In these cases, the panel conducts a factfinding hearing and makes a recommendation to

the board. If expulsion is not recommended, the student is reinstated immediately.

Regardless of whether the board or the administrative panel has conducted the hearing, the board retains final authority to determine whether expulsion is warranted and the decision to expel must be made by the board in a public session.

***Expulsion appeals to the county board of education.*** Students or their parents/guardians may appeal an expulsion by the district governing board to the county board of education. As with all expulsion proceedings, strict timelines and procedures are mandated (Education Code 48925).

The review of a district governing board's expulsion decision by the county governing board is limited to the following (Education Code 48922):

1. whether the district board acted outside or in excess of its jurisdiction;
2. whether there was a fair hearing before the district board;
3. whether there was a prejudicial abuse of discretion in the hearing; and
4. whether there is relevant material evidence which, in the exercise of reasonable diligence, could not have been produced or which was improperly excluded at the hearing before the district board.

A county board may not reverse the decision of the district board based upon a finding of an abuse of discretion unless the county board also determines that the abuse of discretion was prejudicial.

In cases where the county board finds that relevant evidence exists that could not have been produced or was improperly excluded at the district hearing, it may either remand the matter back to the school board for reconsideration and possibly order the student reinstated pending such reconsideration, or grant a new hearing before the county board of education in accordance with Education Code 48919.

In all other cases, the county board enters an order either affirming or reversing the district board. In cases where the county board reverses the district board decision, the county board may direct the district board to expunge the student's and the district's records relating to the expulsion. The decision of the county board is final.

***Readmission.*** Education Code 48916 requires that the board set a readmission review date at the time of the expulsion. The board must readmit the student unless the review determines that the student has not met the conditions of the rehabilitation plan or continues to pose a danger. These hearings must be held in a closed session.

***Suspension/expulsion for individuals with disabilities.*** Individuals with disabilities, as defined by federal law, receive special procedural safeguards in order to ensure that the suspension was not a result of the student's disability or an inappropriate placement by the school. Strict timelines in federal and state law govern each and every step of the process. Because this area of the law changes frequently, the board should consult its legal counsel prior to the expulsion of a special education student.

Education Code 48915 requires the district to offer educational services to special education students during the term of the expulsion. Such services might include independent study, home instruction or another appropriate alternative program.

Some argue that students who require reasonable accommodation under Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act may also be entitled to the procedural safeguards afforded to special education students. Again, the law is unclear in this area and legal counsel should be consulted.

### Ensuring Program Accountability

Accountability is a crucial but often poorly understood role for boards. Boards must ensure accountability to the community for programmatic decisions of the district. It is important that boards monitor program outcomes and hold the superintendent and staff accountable. To fulfill this role, the board should request periodic information on the outcomes of district programs and the overall safety of the schools.

With the superintendent, the board should establish methods to monitor safety programs, policies and curriculum. If improvement is not evident in the preestablished indicators of violence and school climate, the board should explore the reasons and develop strategies for improvement with the superintendent. If the outcomes do not meet established needs as set forth in the vision stat ement and policies, it is the board's responsibility to ensure that appropriate action is taken to meet the needs of its students.

### Ensuring Personnel Accountability

The board's involvement in personnel matters is important, albeit limited. Personnel-related decisions of the board primarily revolve around the adoption of personnel policies, selection and evaluation of the superintendent, collective bargaining and opportunities for staff development. Governing boards can impact the climate and level of safety on campuses through these avenues.

***Expectations for staff.*** Important to the development of a safe, secure and caring school climate are the behaviors of the school

staff. Some schools that have looked closely at their environment have been surprised to find that staff are exhibiting some of the behaviors which the district strongly discourages and/or prohibits among students. Through the board's personnel policy and oversight role, it can take steps to rectify the situation. Boards may declare in their policies their expectations of staff to model appropriate behaviors. Furthermore, boards that denounce vulgar language, bullying, intimidation and racist behavior must be sure that incidents involving staff as the perpetrator are treated as seriously as those perpetrated by students.

***Personnel selection and evaluation.*** Commitment to staff participation in a safe school environment should also be made evident through the personnel evaluation guidelines adopted by the board. Both the hiring and evaluation criteria for the superintendent should include his/her commitment to the board's vision and goals for safe, nonviolent learning institutions. Although the board does not directly evaluate other personnel, it can and should hold the superintendent accountable for the performance of district staff, including staff participation in fostering an appropriate school environment.

**"To counter the culture of violence in school, we must model gentle responses to aggression — it may be the only glimpse of another way of doing business that aggressive students will ever witness."**

**— *V. S. Dill & M. Haberman, 1995***

***Collective bargaining.*** The board can reinforce its commitment to school safety through the collective bargaining process. Employee safety and duties are bargainable topics, as are the consequences for violations of board policy. Staff does not have the right to bargain some management decisions (e.g., the board's decision to institute after-school conflict resolution classes); however, the effect of such management decisions may be bargainable (e.g., increased pay for additional instructional hours).

***Staff training.*** The importance of staff training in violence intervention and prevention cannot be underestimated. School staff interact with students on a daily basis and should be prepared for any situation.

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), through the work of its advisory panel on school violence, issued recommendations for school staff training in its 1995 report *Creating Caring Relationships to Foster Academic Excellence: Recommendations for Reducing Violence in California Schools.* The CTC's recommendations for administrators, teachers and classified staff are briefly outlined below:

1. Administrator training. Administrators should trained in school safety, crisis intervention and violence reduction methods. The CTC believes that administrators need to develop the following skills and attitudes: positive attitudes toward students, parents and personnel; knowledge and

skills necessary for creating a safe school climate and obtaining active parental involvement; commitment to make issues related to school violence a priority of staff development days and to provide a strong support system for new staff; commitment to extracurricular activities and programming; and the ability to collaborate with other local entities, school staff and parents.

2. Teacher training. The CTC recommends that teachers receive training in legal and professional responsibilities regarding student behavior and school safety; creation of a safe, positive, nurturing school climate; skills to utilize and involve community members and resources in the educational process; crisis prevention, management, containment and resolution; effective relationships between the school and home; and effective participation in school safety planning. Multicultural sensitivity and diversity training have also been identified as key components of teacher preparation by a number of agencies and organizations. Due to the breadth and depth of instruction necessary for mastery in these areas, districts should not be relied upon as the sole source of training. Districts can make school safety a priority for their staff development days; however, training on these issues should begin in postsecondary teacher preparation programs. Districts and county offices of education should then work together to develop basic and advanced trainings as needed. Individual districts may want to reinforce the specific violence reduction methods and strategies favored by the board and superintendent.
3. Classified and other staff trainings. All school staff, regardless of their position, need to be trained in school safety and crisis intervention, as well as effective communication techniques and appropriate interactions with students. Some districts have found the use of professional trainers in safety and crisis procedures, combined with a crisis simulation and post-drill evaluation, to be an efficient preparation strategy for all school personnel. Additional training covering specific issues should then be provided for the appropriate staff. For example, although all school staff should receive basic training in crisis intervention techniques, school counselors and psychologists should probably receive advanced training on a continuous basis.

Inherent in the meaning of a caring and safe school climate is the ability of students and staff to develop relationships that transcend academics and interact under conditions that are comfortable to both. Staff need to be trained in age-appropriate interac-

tions and conversation techniques that encourage student participation and cultivate a feeling of community.

To reduce the legitimate confusion and uncertainty surrounding staff-to-student displays of concern, affection and support, the district should develop clear definitions, boundaries and protocols. These policies and procedures governing staff-student interactions should be explained and disseminated through a process that ensures all staff understand their role in providing a safe, secure school environment for students.

School staff should also undergo periodic training and/or reminders about the signs of child abuse (both physical and sexual) and neglect. School staff, both certificated and classified, who have undergone training in child abuse detection are legally responsible for reporting suspected cases of abuse and should be encouraged to file a report whenever students are displaying telltale signs. Staff may need to be reminded that they cannot be held liable for civil damages in the event a report is deemed without merit.

### Becoming Advocates for Safe Schools

School board members are the only locally elected officials chosen solely to represent the interests of children. As such, they have a responsibility to provide leadership in order to draw attention to the needs of schools and children and amass the support necessary to address those needs.

Being an advocate means clearly articulating the board's vision for safe schools, the needs of the children and the district's efforts to accomplish its goals. Advocacy in the legislative arena is necessary to address the broad legal and policy issues that inevitably arise. Perhaps even more critical in this case is the board's leadership within the community to build support for the district's policies and programs and to communicate to the community in the event of a violent incident or threat of violence on campus.

***Leadership in the community.*** To the extent possible, it is desirable to have a proactive plan to address school safety issues in the community. Such an advocacy process would begin with the board's and superintendent's identification of advocacy goals and a commitment to work together to achieve those goals. An effective advocacy plan outlines key messages, target groups, strategies tailored to each group, timelines, spokespersons and budget implications. For example, the board and superintendent may agree to focus on achieving the support of school staff for a specific school safety program or strategy. Staff have direct contact with students, parents and others; if they do not understand and support the board's vision, the messages they are imparting could be at odds

with those of the governance team.

The board also has an important community advocacy role in relation to district parents. Boards need to gain the confidence and support of parents to succeed with their school safety agenda. Without parental support and reinforcement of the rules that schools adopt to protect students, few changes can occur. The first step in this process is to engage parents in the discussion of school safety strategies. Parents and the board can then work together to educate the whole school community and explain how the safety strategies will alleviate parental concerns.

Other target groups at the local level may include businesses, county and city agencies (e.g., law enforcement, courts), elected officials, community organizations, civic groups, places of worship, the media, and other community leaders and concerned citizens. An important goal of the board's community leadership is to bring all these key players together in collaborative efforts. Boards should initiate and/or support existing efforts to coordinate services for at-risk youth, improve the conditions of children and families in the community and develop joint strategies to keep neighborhoods safe.

Although a proactive plan allows the board to provide leadership on these issues in the community, the board must also be prepared to react to issues or situations that may occur on its campuses. It should have a communications plan that addresses how it will handle media inquiries and calls from parents and other community members in the event of a crisis situation.

In any of its communications to the community, it is important that the board present a united front and that each spokesperson support the district's positions. Board members are not individuals when speaking on district issues, but representatives of the board. It may also be helpful for board members to get professional advice and training in media relations and/or hire a public information officer.

***Legislative advocacy at the local, state and federal levels.*** State and federal laws greatly impact the board's operations and its discretion in responding to school safety issues. For example, state and/or federal lawmakers have mandated expulsion under certain circumstances, set penalties for school crimes and established processes to protect the rights of students. They also have provided funding opportunities for school safety programs. At the local level, cities and counties make decisions about the number and allocation of law enforcement officials. All these decisions, and more, impact school safety.

Therefore, boards should seek opportunities to influence local, state and federal legislative and regulatory bodies on these issues. Just as the board can establish a proactive agenda for advocacy within the community, it can set goals and strategies for advocacy at these other levels. District spokespersons can testify at hearings, provide information to agency administrators and work with multidisciplinary task forces to promote a safe-schools agenda. Consistent attention to this board function ensures that those persons holding positions which can impact the district's ability to increase safety are held accountable for their action, or inaction, on the identified needs.

**". . . youth who exhibit violent behavior deserve serious and significant negative consequences. In my opinion, they likewise deserve the opportunity to be reclaimed through a multi-agency, community-based approach which stresses the acquisition of pro-social behaviors."**

*— Steven Kukic, 1995*

### Encouraging Collaborative Approaches

No single element causes violence, and violence is not limited to one environment. Therefore, no single solution or institution can eliminate it. This concept is repeated throughout this handbook — and for good reason. Collaboration among agencies and disciplines is essential for reducing the antisocial and violent behavior of our youth.

School systems can and should play a crucial role in youth violence reduction. Governing boards can help through all the ways discussed above. However, in order for school efforts to be effective, the other systems impacting youth (e.g., law enforcement, courts, social services, mental health services, etc.) must be working toward compatible goals.

Youth who display antisocial or violent behavior often require services the school may not have the resources to provide, such as intensive individual and/or family counseling or extended adult-supervised activities. Although changes are taking place, in most counties the school system has little input into the decisions of other agencies. This is in spite of the fact that these other agencies' decisions (e.g., the judicial system's approach to youth violence, or decisions on out-of-home placements by social services) may have a tremendous impact on the schools' efforts to reduce violent behaviors. Without coordination, work in progress with a child at the school site can be disrupted because of the decisions made by other agencies. Likewise, school decisions regarding expulsions, school site safety programs, school security staffing and so on may impact the work of other agencies.

Effective collaboration aimed at increasing school safety must include law enforcement and the juvenile justice system, in addition to the agencies traditionally identified. Particular attention should be paid to the areas in which methods and goals may be at

odds among agencies. These include enforcement of laws and prosecutions for school-related weapons violations. Working with these systems to develop notification processes when a student has broken the law, or forming a joint court/school probation effort, can deliver impressive dividends.

Equally important to violence reduction are the collaborative ventures with community-based organizations. Many community organizations offer recreational activities, drug prevention services and other services that provide positive adult interactions and teach skills and values.

To encourage a match between agency methods or goals, governing boards need to initiate and/or support community collaborative endeavors. Just as the roles and responsibilities of boards can support school safety efforts, they can support and encourage collaborative relationships. (The ways in which this can be accomplished are discussed more fully in CSBA's 1995 publication *Collaboration for Kids: The School Board's Role*, and in *Cutting Through the Red Tape: Meeting the Needs of California's*

**Table 2 — Agencies Involved in School Violence Reduction Efforts**

| | Overall | Urban | Suburban | Rural |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Police agencies | 90% | 96% | 89% | 87% |
| Justice system | 76 | 83 | 70 | 77 |
| Social services | 72 | 79 | 68 | 71 |
| PTA and parent groups | 64 | 83 | 72 | 48 |
| Mental health | 61 | 64 | 52 | 66 |
| Youth services | 58 | 77 | 62 | 44 |
| Health agencies | 45 | 55 | 39 | 44 |
| Churches | 44 | 57 | 38 | 42 |
| Business community | 42 | 61 | 45 | 28 |
| Recreation | 39 | 55 | 42 | 29 |
| State agencies | 38 | 48 | 32 | 7 |
| Adult mentors | 36 | 57 | 37 | 24 |
| Federal agencies | 21 | 35 | 16 | 18 |
| Universities | 17 | 35 | 2 | 11 |
| Housing Authority | 13 | 37 | 5 | 8 |
| Other | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |

*Source: National School Boards Association, 1993.*

*Children* published in 1992 by CSBA, the California State Association of Counties and the League of California Cities.) Briefly, the board's role in fostering collaborative endeavors includes:

1. *Advocacy.* The board's willingness and ability to advocate for collaboration and build strong community support are essential for systemic reform. Board members can use this role to reach out to other locally elected officials about coordinating services for children with violent behaviors; build community and media support for coordinated efforts that reduce violence; and advocate at all governmental levels for programs that improve the conditions of children, thereby reducing some of the identified causes of violence.
2. *Needs assessment.* An accurate assessment of the community's needs is the basis for an effective system of coordinated services. The board should work with staff to gather information about the existing resources and needs within the community, with particular attention to students displaying antisocial and violent behavior.
3. *Vision and climate for collaboration.* The governance team sets the vision for the school system. It may also be involved in developing a collective vision of all the stakeholders in the collaborative. Towards this end, the board should emphasize and encourage a family-centered, preventative approach to community violence and may become involved in the strategic planning process of other agencies.
4. *Planning and organization of the collaborative.* Based on the needs of the community and the goals established by the stakeholders, members of the collaborative need to develop a plan for achieving these goals. Joint projects or programs need to be agreed upon (e.g., sports leagues to provide alternative activities for youth, community mentorship program, counseling, parent education, etc.) and roles of participants clearly identified. Through the board's governance role, it can take steps to increase collaborative success by ensuring that thorough planning and staff preparation are in place. The board may also ensure that an effective plan is in place by recommending agencies and organizations to be included, approving new services to be offered at school sites or existing school services to be coordinated, encouraging the development of a process for addressing organizational "turf" issues at the outset, and establishing joint powers agreements when feasible.
5. *Budget and facilities issues.* Boards have the opportunity to make budget and facilities decisions that support collaboration while improving school safety and reducing violence.

Appropriate board roles include allocating district/county resources to support collaboration, approving the use of school facilities for collaborative activities and advocating for adequate funding levels and greater funding flexibility.

6. *Personnel issues.* The greatest impediments to restructuring service delivery tend to be attitudinal barriers, such as apathy, fear, lack of trust and turf protection. School boards can help staff and collaborative participants to get past these barriers by providing opportunities to communicate with each other and hiring a coordinator to accomplish the necessary daily tasks. To ensure a prepared staff, the board can include collaboration as one of the superintendent's performance goals, consider incentives to encourage staff participation in collaboratives and provide staff development to teach collaborative skills.
7. *Evaluation of collaborative efforts.* By receiving regular feedback about the outcomes of coordinated services, the board can assess the progress and effectiveness of school safety and violence reduction efforts. To ensure accountability for collaborative efforts, the board should ensure that formal evaluations are conducted on a regular basis, ask staff to establish a process and schedule for receiving feedback from all stakeholders, and present that information to the community.

## More Ideas

In addition to the governance strategies described in this chapter, districts and schools have tried a number of programs, prevention techniques and interventions in order to reduce school violence. Some of these strategies may be initiated at the district level and supported by board policies; in districts with site-based management and shared decision making, many strategies are initiated at the site level by school councils or individual school staff.

***Mentoring programs***. Mentoring programs provide responsible, successful adult role models for troubled students. At some schools, mentoring programs have played an important role in improving graduation rates and reducing suspensions, campus disturbances and violence. Students benefit from the mentor's motivation, academic help, ideas for career exploration and/or discussions of positive social and life skills.

***Awards for achievement***. Student self-esteem, staff morale and a sense of community often improve when individuals are recognized for their efforts and importance to the community.

***Parent/student contracts.*** Parent/student contracts are increasingly being used as a method to expand parental awareness of, and responsibility for, the actions of their child. The contract is usually signed by the parent, student and principal and contains an acknowledgment of school rules and a list of each party's responsibilities for ensuring compliance. A contract may include all school rules or be specific to particular subjects. The consequences of violating the contract should be clearly stated.

***Parent education and outreach programs.*** Improving the parent-child relationship could reduce the risk of childhood behavior problems and subsequent antisocial behavior and violence. Such programs must help parents understand their role in the child's physical and social development, and should address the social stresses that can hinder parents' ability to meet their children's needs (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 1993).

***Gang prevention programs.***

A successful preventative approach to gang involvement builds self-esteem. It should address the factors that draw youth into gangs: disconnection from the family, fear of victimization, peer pressure, lack of education, poor employment skills, a family history of gang involvement and lack of alternatives. Programs that provide direction and motivation for students to resist involvement with gangs reinforce socially constructive behavior, offer alternative recreational activities, develop educational and occupational goals and provide vocational experiences, and encourage personal responsibility (Elder, Fischer & Forthmann, 1994).

***Student safety forums.*** Student forums can be designed to both inform and elicit students' ideas about a particular problem. Students gain multiple skills through the process of learning about an issue in depth and then analyzing the solutions in a group. Students also are

given a heightened sense of importance and value when administrators take the recommendations to the board for consideration. The schools and the administration benefit through this process by learning about current student thinking and which approaches will be most readily accepted.

Forums called to address specific incidents of violence may also be helpful for both students and staff. When a violent incident takes place, residual feelings and effects are to be expected. Giving students the opportunity to voice their fears, anger and anxiety in a safe, appropriately prepared environment can prevent spin-off violence. Staff benefit because they can learn of potentially dangerous situations and take measures to head off future violence.

***Hotlines.*** "Weapons hotlines" give students the opportunity to anonymously report weapons on school grounds. The guarantee of anonymity enables students to report weapons without fear of retaliation. Some districts have tied hotlines to rewards programs.

***Metal detectors.*** A survey conducted by the National School Boards Association (1993) found that metal detectors are used in approximately 39 percent of urban school districts to detect weapons brought to school. Metal detector searches must be nondiscriminatory and random, and the Attorney General recommends that advance notice of random searches be given to parents and students. Districts must weigh their security needs against the cost of the equipment and training and any potential infringement on instructional time. They must also consider the physical conditions at the school (e.g., multiple entrances, ground-level windows) and security needs on the playground or school perimeter.

***Video surveillance.*** The use of 24-hour security cameras in hallways, lunchrooms and buses may provide schools with needed information and deter school violence. Consideration must be given to the building infrastructure compatibility, cost, and precautions necessary to ensure that student privacy would not be compromised. Boards also should consider the potentially negative effects on school climate which cameras can produce if the school community is not fully informed and supportive.

***Banning beepers and cellular phones.*** Beepers and cellular phones are frequently used during illegal drug transactions, are often seen as a status symbol and are a distraction in class. Education Code 48901.5 prohibits their possession on school premises and at all school-sponsored activities. Boards may, however, allow exceptions when the beeper or phone is necessary for health reasons.

***Elimination or searches of lockers.*** Elimination of lockers has the dual effect of reducing the impact of vandalism as well as limiting contraband storage areas. Elimination of lockers also may make it necessary to alter schedules or make other accommodations to compensate for a lack of storage space for school books and materials.

Districts that maintain lockers should probably have a policy which clearly states that lockers are school property

and that school officials have the right to open and inspect any locker without student permission when they have reasonable suspicion that the search will disclose illegal activity or when odors or smoke emanate from the locker. In accordance with court decisions, all unannounced searches must be based on reasonable suspicion, not on curiosity, rumor or hunch. Another alternative may be to hold regular, announced searches with students standing by their lockers.

***Searches of individual students.*** In some particularly dangerous circumstances, the physical search of an individual student may be necessary. It is recommended, however, that this strategy be used sparingly and only as a last resort. Whenever possible, the least intrusive search method should be utilized. Under current law, physical searches may be conducted only if the search is justified at its inception and, as conducted, is not excessively intrusive in light of the student's age, sex and nature of the infraction (*New Jersey v. TLO*, 469 U.S. 325, 1985). It is highly recommended that school authorities consult with legal counsel prior to conducting a search where authority is not certain (Elder, Fischer & Forthmann, 1994).

***Block scheduling.*** Frequent interaction of students in hallways during passing periods may lead to greater opportunities for school violence. Reducing the number of classes per day and increasing the length of classes can be beneficial because it reduces the number of passing periods.

***Student IDs.*** A student photo identification system can provide a quick way to identify unauthorized people who do not belong on the school campus. Some schools are investigating the use of ID badges for multiple purposes, including monitoring attendance and/or school lunch program participation as well as enabling quicker parental contact in emergency situations.

***Closed campus.*** Requiring students to remain on campus may help keep the students safe and the campus secure throughout the school day in addition to decreasing afternoon absenteeism. Boards can expect the initial reaction from the students to be negative, but this can usually be overcome with increases in campus activities and collaborations with other organizations. Other issues the district may need to consider when implementing a closed campus policy are perimeter fencing, gated parking lots, restrictions on entrances, use of visitor passes and student IDs, availability of food services and exit plans in the event of an emergency.

***School lock-downs.*** Procedures for securing all students and staff in buildings can be useful during times of emergency or unrest. A detailed plan for lock-downs should be a part of site safety plans.

***Parent patrols.*** Utilizing parents or other community members to monitor the halls, playgrounds and areas surrounding school campuses can improve school safety and climate. Principals in the Chicago schools have found that the conspicuous presence of parents on campus has proven to be the most suc-

cessful deterrent to school violence (Crouch & Williams, 1995). Having parents in the schools also increases the opportunity for students to interact with responsible adults.

***Security personnel.*** Some districts have developed partnerships with law enforcement in which deputy sheriffs or police officers are assigned to campuses. This strategy gives law enforcement higher visibility and the ability to respond immediately to a crisis on the school campus. It also provides opportunities for positive, nonconfrontational contact between students and law enforcement. Opening up school facilities for use by law enforcement further encourages a reciprocal relationship that benefits both schools and law enforcement.

Other districts employ their own security personnel. The board should be aware that districts may be liable for the intentional wrongdoing and/or negligence of district police officers acting within the scope of their employment.

Another security option is having a non-sworn youth/community relations officer assigned to the school. Sometimes called "community service officers," they do not carry weapons and their function is more like that of a social worker. Rather than focusing on events that have occurred, community service officers attempt to identify difficult students and develop trusting relationships with them to prevent inappropriate behavior.

***Communications devices for staff.*** Access to two-way communication devices allows staff to alert the office or law enforcement of dangerous situations. Some schools have installed telephones in each classroom, allowing for effective emergency communications. Walkie-talkies or personal alert transmitters permit staff to call for assistance from their rooms or from remote locations.

***Repair of vandalism and graffiti.*** Quick removal of graffiti and repair of vandalized facilities reduce the fear, intimidation and intragang communication desired by the perpetrators. Staff should quickly photograph and then cover over such messages to help mitigate the effects and discourage future vandalism. Students who commit an act of vandalism may be subject to school disciplinary measures and/or may be prosecuted through other legal means. State law (Penal Code 640.5-640.6 and Civil Code 1714.1) provides that reimbursement of damages and rewards may be collected from any individual or from the custodial parent of any minor who commits any act of theft or vandalism. If reparation is not made, the district may withhold the student's grades, diploma and/or transcript.

***Remediation workshops.*** Governing boards can require students and their parents to attend remediation workshops to address problem behaviors (Education Code 48263). Students who have been suspended can be required to participate in programs that address their problem behavior and, for some offenses, the board can make the participation of the students' parents or guardians a mandatory condition for return to the classroom.

***On-site suspension.*** Student suspensions for serious offenses are necessary for maintaining school discipline. For those students who are not perceived to be a danger, on-site suspension may be a better alternative than home suspension without adequate adult supervision. Typical on-site suspension programs require students to continue with their coursework in a tightly supervised setting, separate from the regular campus and students. Counseling or referrals for counseling are also frequently included as a component.

***Saturday work program.*** Saturday work programs are another alternative to home suspension (Education Code 48900.6). Students are required to work at the campus on projects such as raking leaves, cleaning lockers or picking up trash. These programs provide an undesirable consequence for inappropriate behavior while benefiting the school. Implementation of weekend work programs may be difficult, however, due to the need for adequate supervision.

# 5. Serving Youth Through Alternative Education Programs

In their effort to provide safe schools for students and staff, governing boards cannot forget the needs of those students who are considered to be, or have proven to be, a threat.

The desire to create and maintain safe learning environments has inevitably led to the removal of those students exhibiting violent and/or inappropriate behavior. As more schools adopt stricter codes and zero-tolerance offenses increase, the need for educational services outside the regular school environment will continue to grow.

**"If we cease trying to teach difficult students, we shift the responsibility for their enculturation elsewhere — and there is no elsewhere."**

*— L. Brendtro & N. Long, 1995*

Ideally, these students face the consequences deemed appropriate for the behavior exhibited, then quickly return to school and resume their education. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. For particularly dangerous behaviors, or for uncooperative students, removal from the regular school for an extended period of time is necessary.

Boards are required to ensure that an educational program is provided for expelled students during the period of the expulsion (Education Code 48916.1). Districts often refer them to district- or county-operated alternative educational programs better prepared to address their behavior. Sometimes private schools accept these students.

The establishment and maintenance of community and juvenile court schools have long been one of the primary responsibilities of county boards of education (Education Code 1980 and 48645.2). Community and juvenile court schools have as their purpose the stabilization and improvement of the student behaviorally and academically, followed by return to the home school. Students in these programs have often experienced one or more of the following: alcohol and drug abuse, rape, incest, physical violence, emotional abuse and neglect. These students may also live with dysfunctional families and have access to guns and other weapons. Community schools serve students who are referred by the juvenile

court or a probation officer, students expelled from school or referred by a School Attendance Review Board (SARB), students referred by their local school district with parental consent and students who are homeless. In short, these schools typically serve the most troubled students.

Juvenile court schools are those schools located in group homes, juvenile detention centers or other locations which house youth under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. Students are typically between the ages of 6 and 18 and have been incarcerated in juvenile halls, probation camps or other detention programs. The range of offenses among these wards extends to the most serious crimes, and gang affiliation and drug use are commonplace.

**"Only when school itself can be made to seem useful and involving can one expect to see any significant diminution in school disorder, including violence and vandalism."**

***— A. Binder, G. Geis & B. Dickson, 1988***

As of July 1996, school districts have been authorized to operate community day schools. A student may be assigned to a district's community day school only if he/she is expelled for any reason, is referred through the probation process, or is referred by a SARB or other district-level referral process.

The scope and form of alternative programs are largely determined by the district or county governing board in accordance with state guidelines. Academic programs offered in community day schools must be comparable to those available to students of a similar age in the school district.

However, youth displaying violent or inappropriate behavior are frequently the same youth failing to achieve academically. Thus, the inability of these students to function effectively within the traditional school program compels the various alternative schools to respond differently. It is common for the curriculum in alternative programs to emphasize social, job training and independent living skills much more heavily than in regular school programs. These programs also may modify the curriculum to make the subject matter more relevant to students' daily lives and/or integrate computer programming and usage.

In addition, schools serving troubled youth often have lower student-teacher ratios and a variety of support services. Typical services include individual and family counseling, job training programs and other similar supports.

In offering alternative programs, school and county boards are faced with the challenge of providing effective alternative education for troubled youth without conveying the idea that misbehavior is being rewarded with "extra" or "better" programs. The additional services and smaller class sizes required to effectively stabilize and educate these students require greater resources. The allocation of

greater resources to these students seems incongruous to many, in the face of budget and program reductions at the regular school site.

Students must understand that violence in any form is unacceptable on school campuses and that unpleasant consequences follow inappropriate behavior. At the same time, educators and other providers need to work with troubled youth to reawaken and suitably channel their innate desire to learn. Communities cannot afford to be without education programs that help youth become productive members of society. Large numbers of youth lacking adequate education, socialization and job skills will only serve to increase crime and violence in our communities and our schools.

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# Appendix. Sample Programs in California

### ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS WITH PURPOSE, Los Angeles County Office of Education

Alternative Schools with Purpose is a comprehensive and innovative educational model for youth in at-risk circumstances. The goal of this program is to create an environment where students, teachers, administrators, community and family support each other in fostering the academic, social and moral development of the students. The premise behind the program is that an enlightened, socially conscious student in a nurturing, disciplined environment is less likely to continue to engage in violent and high-risk activities.

Alternative Schools with Purpose is operated by the Los Angeles County Office of Education through its Division of Alternative Education and in partnership with the Inglewood, Lynwood, Pasadena and other school districts. It is a year-round program serving students at the elementary, middle and senior high school levels. Eligible students are those who have been expelled, put on probation, or selected due to a variety of social, economic or cultural barriers which make it difficult for them to reach academic goals.

The major components of the program are course-work, community mentoring, career awareness and work experience, parenting education and character development. As part of the coursework component, an individualized learning plan suited to the needs and interests of each student is developed with the input of the student, parents and district personnel. Special emphasis is placed on teaching these students about the contributions that people of various ethnic, cultural, racial and religious backgrounds have made in academic fields. The curriculum is designed ultimately to prepare students to be "mainstreamed" back into the general school.

The first Alternative School with Purpose was established in 1991, specifically to help Latino and African American youngsters succeed in school, graduate and pursue higher education. The

county modeled the programs after court schools and community schools. Funding is provided to the county on a per-student basis, and typically the county pays for the teacher and instructional assistants (class size ratios are kept to 17:1) while the district provides the classroom and other facilities, as well as books and instructional materials.

### CHOICES Youth Program, San Bernardino County

CHOICES is an effort to reduce youth violence, gang activity, and alcohol and other drug use through increased collaboration between education, the criminal justice system, law enforcement and the community. Since its inception in 1987, CHOICES has spread from San Bernardino County; programs are now operating in Riverside County, Orange County, and even Boca Raton, Florida.

The program assembles students who have been identified by school and/or law enforcement personnel as those who could most benefit from more community support. The CHOICES program consists of five components (though some communities are not able to offer students choices in each one of these components). These five components are: school-based personal and social skills training courses; wilderness trips; parenting classes; tutors/mentors from the community who serve as positive role models; and a follow-up component, which utilizes existing community-based organizations to provide after-school and weekend activities in order to sustain and enhance any positive changes that are made during the CHOICES core program.

Each of these five components is designed to reduce or buffer the effects of one or more risk factors for adolescent violence and drug use. They also permit the development of strong social bonding between youth and their families and the community. CHOICES participants receive a consistent message across all the program components — that is, positive social behavior is expected and reinforced.

The program continues to be supported partially by volunteers. School districts and state and local grants also provide funding, depending on the capabilities of the local communities. For certain components, such as personal skills courses taught by law enforcement officers, school districts typically pay for the officers' instructional time.

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM, College Park Elementary School, Newport Beach

College Park Elementary School in Newport Beach is an example of a school offering a conflict management program. The College

Park program was established in 1994. Each year, 70 students from grades 3-6 apply to become "conflict managers." Those chosen as managers must undergo (and pass) a two-day training session, where they learn communication skills and methods to help other children solve problems. Methods include cooperative negotiating, constructive persuading, discussion, and the philosophy of agreeing to differ. These managers are assigned to roam the playground in pairs, helping to solve problems as they arise and providing other students with somewhere to go with a conflict. When a student engages the help of a conflict manager, he/she must go through a set process, which concludes with a discussion of ways that the problem can be avoided in the future. These 70 conflict managers have weekly meetings and also are responsive to a jury of five children who perform self-governance with assistance from the program coordinator.

During the first year of the College Park program, funding was provided by donations from teachers; the second year money from D.A.R.E. was utilized.

**COUNTER FORCE and DIVERSION PROGRAM, Vacaville Unified School District, City of Vacaville**

The City of Vacaville and the Vacaville Police Department have developed these programs as extensions of their Youth Services Section. Provided in cooperation with the Vacaville Unified School District, both Counter Force and the Diversion program take an interdisciplinary approach to targeting and serving the at-risk youth population.

A Youth Services office is located on each of the city's two high school campuses and serves both high school and middle school students. These offices are staffed with a law enforcement officer, a social worker and other personnel. About $600,000 in funding was created for the programs as a result of the city council shifting funds from other programs and departments. This was done subsequent to a plan developed by a mayor's task force.

Counter Force combines a work program, counseling, life skills classes, recreation and an alumni program. After referral into the program, each student is interviewed to determine specific needs and appropriate recreational activities. For those old enough and eligible to work, the city hires students for assorted jobs and also contracts with local businesses to employ students. Approximately 200 students have gained employment experience since the program started in 1994.

Youth Services also operates a juvenile diversion program for

first-time offenders, in which guidance and coordinated support services are provided for youth and their families. All youth arrested as first-time offenders are assigned a Standard Diversion Contract. This contract can include non-paid work hours, family counseling, law and education classes, essay assignments and officer supervision.

The program has identified three elements that are essential to a successful intervention approach: establishing positive and rewarding relationships with youth, educating youth in developing the necessary life skills in order to cope more effectively in society, and increasing the ability for at-risk youth to interact with mainstream society in an employed and marketable capacity.

### COURT SCHOOLS PTSA, The Fresno County Office of Education

County court schools serve students who are unable to access traditional schools due to their placement in residential facilities. Court schools operate at juvenile hall and other residential placements serving students with violent and/or antisocial behavior. These students often come from troubled backgrounds and may have little support from their parents. Because of these impediments to traditional parental support of supplemental educational materials and programs, students in these schools often are left without the educational opportunities found in other schools.

Members of the Fresno community recognized the need for an avenue through which the community could assist court school students and established the Court Schools Parent, Teacher, Student Association (PTSA) in 1986. The Court Schools PTSA operates similar to traditional school PTAs — providing support for the students, parents and programs of the Fresno county court schools. Members come together to discuss issues of importance to the students and raise funds for needed services and materials.

Membership in the Fresno County Court Schools PTSA has grown from a few people to over 160 members (1993-94) and includes parents, teachers and interested citizens as well as many professional and business leaders. Through the one fundraising event held each year (a combination luncheon and auction), funds are generated to provide court school students with a variety of benefits. Recent expenditures have included scholarships for court school students who continue their education in college or vocational programs, establishment and support of the court school library, teacher mini-grants for curriculum improvement, payment of student GED and California High School Proficiency Exam fees, parent education

programs, refurbishment of the gymnasium, a public address system for the school and the networking of the computers and video system throughout the classrooms and living units.

The Fresno County Court Schools PTSA has provided an avenue through which parents, teachers and the community at large can help provide quality educational programming to assist in the rehabilitation process of these students. It has enabled the community to have a better understanding of the difficulties court school students experience and begin to see them in a different light. The Court Schools PTSA has enabled the students to see that people in the community care about their progress and are willing to expend the time and money necessary to enhance their opportunities for success.

### CREATING SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR POWERFUL STUDENT LEARNING, California School Leadership Academy (CSLA)

CSLA developed this program module to help school leaders understand ways in which they can shape the environment and culture of schools in order to promote nonviolence and nonaggressive behavior.

School personnel participate in workshops to learn how to utilize the "Creating Safe and Productive Environments" module. "Creating Safe and Productive Environments" emphasizes strategies that build on an understanding of students' contextual worlds and the ways in which those contexts influence students' learning. The program module engages school leaders in auditing occurrences of violence (both physical and verbal) in their schools and analyzing the degree to which the school's cultural norms, values, beliefs and expectations support or tacitly condone violent and aggressive behaviors. Building on this analysis, participants then design strategies to shape cultural norms of nonviolence and examine resources to implement those strategies. As well as dealing with student-to-student violence, "Creating Safe and Productive Environments" seeks to inspire staff and school leaders to examine the ways in which they, as adults, send signals that may create violent or aggressive environments.

### DAYS OF RESPECT, Albany High School, Albany

The original Days of Respect took place on three successive mornings at Albany High School in 1994. The program consisted of presentations, workshops and interactive exercises on topics ranging from sexual harassment and racial bias to rape and the dangers of guns. The purpose of the program is to develop mutual

regard among diverse people in a school community, thereby reducing violence and improving the quality of life in the community. The program is based on a model developed by the Oakland Men's Project (a group of counselors and facilitators who work to prevent violence).

What makes Days of Respect most unique is that it is both planned and implemented by students and parents, so that a collaborative, proactive approach can be taken to deal with potential violence. At the outset of the program, a steering committee is formed with staff, students and parents to oversee the event. Then a larger group of students and parents are trained and given the scripts necessary to conduct a series of exercises involving the entire student body. These exercises are designed to facilitate communication and begin building alliances between students of different cultures, gender, ages and lifestyles. They also enable students to examine the climate of their school and brainstorm ways to continue to make changes within their school community. For example, during one of the assemblies, students and faculty performed skits, offered personal testimony, and presented videos and poems in order to illuminate different issues related to respect.

Following the assemblies, students break off into smaller groups for interactive exercises. During these exercises, students are grouped together randomly so that they are paired with people with whom they might not otherwise have occasion to speak. In this way, students have a chance to learn more about people who are different from themselves. They also get to see parents and teachers in a different role.

Another important component of Days of Respect is that members of the media are actively encouraged to attend and report on the event in order to build greater community support.

### FACES (Families And Children Empowered for Success), San Diego

FACES is a collaborative effort to prevent juvenile delinquency recidivism with a focus on minority youth. The San Diego County Probation Department, San Diego County Office of Education, Spectrum and the Office of Criminal Justice Planning provide a multifaceted program of counseling and education for high-risk youth who would otherwise be placed in long-term residential facilities.

FACES provides services to youth and their families which consist of two components: (1) a day center program of remedial/accelerated school and tutoring; individual, group, conjoint and family counseling; daily recreation, community awareness and cultural activities; job

preparation and placement assistance; and (2) extensive home-based family preservation services to identify and modify behaviors that lead to family breakdown and delinquency, link families to community resources and provide follow-up supervision.

San Diego County court schools provide the facilities, teachers and transportation for the students in this program. FACES operates with one teacher and one teacher's aide for each 12 students. Remedial and/or accelerated instruction, assistance in GED or Proficiency Exam preparation and entry into secondary or vocational education programs are provided. In addition to teaching the curricula, teachers are responsible for participating in the daily pre-school counseling wherein students set their behavior and academic goals for the day and the end-of-day debriefing to discuss student accomplishments, shortcomings and mishaps.

Probation officers and counselors are on-site to provide immediate intervention and assistance. The probation officers and community-based organizations provide weekly education and counseling sessions to the students on gang diversion, chemical dependency, anger management, sexual/physical abuse, self-esteem, limit setting, business/economics and life skills. Mental health professionals, including marriage and family, chemical dependency and bilingual counselors, are also available daily to provide services to youth and their families as needed. Probation officers work with families in their homes two nights per week and on weekends to assist with conflicts and provide support and education on parenting and healthy family life. Siblings take part in the conjoint therapy and parent education classes to encourage family improvement.

A recent evaluation of the FACES program indicates that more than 50 percent of the at-risk youth remain at home approximately 18 months after enrollment, a majority of the parents have participated in the family education classes and siblings seem to be remaining in the home at higher rates.

### PROJECT CUFFS (Community United For Fullerton Safety), Fullerton

Project CUFFS takes an interagency approach to preventing youth in the Fullerton community from using drugs and displaying delinquent and antisocial behavior. The purpose of the program is to build a coordinated prevention/intervention coalition of the school, community agencies, law enforcement, probation and prosecution, and concerned families.

Initiated in 1992, Project CUFFS is funded by the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Planning and includes five major com-

munity components: education, law enforcement, probation, prosecution and prevention. The Fullerton Local Coordinating Committee, comprised of representatives from the participating agencies, meets twice a month to provide leadership, direction and support for the objective of the grant — to proactively reduce the level of gang violence and divert potentially dangerous gang activity of students into positive and constructive behaviors.

Project CUFFS provides inservice training to school administrators, school board members, school staff and project participants regarding signs and symptoms of gang involvement and drug abuse. Through the program, high-risk students are identified and referred to intervention and counseling services. Conflict resolution programs and noon-time and after-school recreational activities are also important components.

At selected schools, facilitators coordinate services with a gang prevention specialist. Prevention of gang violence and substance abuse prevention are included in the curriculum at these sites.

The law enforcement component of Project CUFFS has helped inhibit the ability of gang members to associate, plan and commit gang-related crime and violence through enforcement of court-ordered gang terms and conditions of probation. A project-assigned district attorney helps assure "vertical prosecution" of gang-involved youth.

### PROJECT IMPACT, Sacramento

Luther Burbank High School in the Sacramento City Unified School District has developed a successful program of student, teacher and community interaction to reduce drugs and gangs on campus.

Through drug and gang suppression grants from the Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP), two programs have been developed — Project IMPACT (Individuals Making People Aware of Campus Troubles) and a gang identification data base.

Project IMPACT was originally envisioned as a program for an ethnically diverse group of at-risk high school students. As the project has evolved and the need for the involvement of reliable and responsible students has become apparent, the program utilizes students who are self-starters, motivated and maintain at least a "B" average. Students interested in the project are usually referred to the project director by current or past students and teachers and then the director makes the final selection.

Project IMPACT is a program wherein high school students create and act out vignettes of typical situations that may occur

involving drugs and gangs. Videotapes of these vignettes are taken to elementary schools in the district and presented by the students to third- through sixth-grade students. The high school students stand by during the video presentation and stop the tape at important points to discuss the actions or decisions that should be made in these situations. The high school students also teach the elementary students decision-making and refusal skills.

Another grant through OJCP has enabled Luther Burbank High staff to develop and use an on-site data base of known gang members and gang activity. The project director interviews all students involved in altercations on the campus to determine gang involvement and gather information. Students have also become a major source of information on gang activities and involvement and incidents in the community. Once students realized that the informants and the information would be confidential, they often warn of impending confrontations and violence. The information in the data base is confidential but is shared with law enforcement and probation in a manner that does not violate the student's privacy.

This data base has allowed school personnel to document disruptive incidents, compile information on gang structures and symbols and track the behavior of students with difficulties. Information that has been gathered through this process and shared with law enforcement agencies is credited with helping police solve a homicide and a number of car thefts. It has also assisted school personnel in reducing and preventing incidents related to gang disputes, drug sales, confrontations among students and student intimidation.

During the upcoming year Project IMPACT will be adding a full-time armed probation officer with a total caseload of youth within the target area and a part-time probation officer with youth in the feeder elementary and middle schools. A community service officer will also be added. With these additions it is anticipated that more student contact and information sharing will be possible and the campus will continue to improve its safe atmosphere and prevention focus.

### SCHOOL/LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIP CADRE, State Departments of Education and Justice

This program was initiated in 1983 when the state attorney general and the state superintendent of public instruction entered into a school/law enforcement partnership in order to help promote safe schools, improve school attendance and encourage good citizenship. The state legislature and the gover-

nor endorsed this concept by enacting legislation which provides funding for the partnership cadre. The partnership is administered by the California Attorney General's Crime and Violence Prevention Center and the Department of Education's School Safety and Violence Prevention Office.

The partnership's mission is to provide leadership in promoting safe schools through interagency collaboration. Recent efforts have focused on three major areas: encouraging each school in the state to develop and implement safety and crisis response plans; supporting a school/community violence prevention approach that emphasizes collaborative efforts among educators, law enforcement and community members; and helping schools solve safety problems by providing technical assistance and resource materials.

One of the unique aspects of the partnership cadre is that it provides a large network of experts and volunteers at no cost to schools, criminal justice organizations and youth agencies. Members of the cadre serve these agencies through telephone consultations, workshops, meetings and print/video materials.

Since its inception, cadre members have made more than 175,000 personal contacts, including 19,000 in 1994.

Partnership funds have also helped facilitate statewide safe school and crisis response training through 11 lead county offices of education. Additionally, the partnership annually provides up to 100 mini-grants to schools which are ready to implement existing safety plans. Finally, an annual Partnership Conference is held which brings together school and law enforcement administrators, police officers, teachers, counselors, juvenile court judges, community leaders, parents and students for general sessions and workshops on a variety of school safety topics. The goal of this conference is to broaden the participants' perspective on school safety into recognition that it is a community issue which involves everyone.

### TEEN COURT DIVERSION, El Dorado County

The El Dorado County Office of Education and the local school districts in Placerville and Tahoe are working with the county probation department and court systems to teach students about the legal system and allow offenders who admit their guilt to be sentenced by a jury of their peers. Students at all participating schools receive credit for their participation and at El Dorado High School students get extra credit in a course designed to complement the courtroom experience (Teens, Crime and the Community).

Youth offenders are screened by the probation department to

determine eligibility. In most cases, youth accepted into the teen court program have committed misdemeanor offenses, although four felony cases were accepted in the 1994-95 school year. The parents of an eligible offender are interviewed to determine the youth's attitude and home behavior. If the youth is determined to be an appropriate candidate for the program he/she is interviewed, the program is explained and the youth is given the option of participation in the teen court program rather than a juvenile court hearing. As a final step prior to admission to the teen court program, offenders must plead guilty to the offense and be willing to accept the sentence of their peers.

High school students are selected to participate in the teen court program and assigned to work as either a juror, attorney, bailiff or court clerk. Volunteer attorneys serve as mentors to the youth acting as counsel and aid them in their briefs and courtroom presentations. The court is presided over by a volunteer Superior Court judge in order to ensure that all sentences are binding on the offender.

The student volunteers serving as attorneys present arguments for the jury's consideration supporting their sentencing recommendations. The attorneys may call the offender and witnesses to the stand for questioning. Sentences often prescribed by peer juries include a tour of the juvenile hall, service on the teen court jury, tours of alcohol and drug treatment facilities, job training, community service and the writing of essays and apology letters. Occasionally peer juries create unique sentencing terms and conditions designed to meet the special needs of the offender. In addition to punishment, support and referrals are provided to the youth and their family in order to correct any underlying difficulties and prevent future violations.

Early results indicate that teen court is improving the knowledge and awareness of legal processes of all participants and that those sentenced have lower recidivism rates than peers not involved in the program.

### TEEN LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE RETREAT PROGRAM, Daly City

This program, administered by the Daly City Parks and Recreation Department and local high school principals, began after a gang retaliation killing. The mayor assembled a Say No to Gangs Committee which recommended that students representing a cross-section of the two local, rival high schools participate in weekend seminars to exchange ideas and perceptions about high school teenagers with each other and with adults from the community.

The resulting program, Teen Leadership Challenge Retreat, consists of taking 150 students from Daly City's two high schools away from the inner city to a wilderness camp for a weekend of leadership training. The participating students are identified as leaders of their peer groups — not only academic, student government and sports leaders, but also gang leaders and other social group leaders. At the camp, these students are mixed together in exercises designed to break down barriers and help them understand what positive leadership qualities are. A respected facilitator leads the students through the series of exercises. Recreational activities are also conducted, including swimming, night walks and campfire programs. Supervision is provided by city council members, teachers from both high schools and staff from the parks and recreation department.

Another part of the program focuses students on discovering core values that they share with others. The students develop action plans which they can implement upon their return to school. In the past, action plans developed at the retreat have led to the establishment of freshmen orientation programs, "Big Brother/Sister" programs where seniors "adopt" incoming freshmen students, "Friendship Weeks," and a "World Council" at Jefferson High School that brings together leaders of diverse student groups to plan activities, including a health fair.

The program coordinators report that relations between the two schools have improved greatly, and law enforcement representatives report a reduction in gang activity — both of which translate into better relations on a community level.

The program receives funding from the City of Daly City, Jefferson Union High School District (which, among other things, provides the transportation to and from the retreat) and the Peninsula Community Foundation.

# Web Resources on School Safety

- Keep Schools Safe, a collaborative project of NSBA and the National Association of the Attorneys General (contains guidelines on developing safe-school plans and sample policies):
  **www.keepschoolssafe.org**
- Bibliography of Helpful Resources on School Violence:
  **www.keepschoolssafe.org/biblio.htm**
- California Department of Education, Safe Schools and Violence Prevention Office:
  **www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/safety/safetyhome.html**
- Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence:
  **www.colorado.edu/cspv**
- Drug Strategies:
  **www.drugstrategies.org**
- Early Warning, Timely Response – A Guide to Safe Schools, from the U.S. departments of Education and Justice, offers a summary of the research on violence prevention, intervention, and crisis response in schools:
  **www.air.org/cecp/guide/**
- Indicators of School Crime and Safety:
  **www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/iscs98.htm**
- National School Safety Center:
  **www.nssc1.org**
- National Youth Gang Center:
  **www.iir.com/nygc**
- North Carolina Center for the Prevention of School Violence:
  **www.ncsu.edu/cpsv**
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – School Crime Webpage:
  **www.ncjvs.org/ojjdp**
- Partnerships Against Violence Network:
  **www.pavnet.org**
- Safe Schools Coalition:
  **www.ed.mtu.edu/safe**
- Student Pledge Against Gun Violence:
  **www.pledge.org**
- U.S. Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program (includes the 1998 Annual Report on School Safety):
  **www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS**
- U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice (includes a recent report on the use of after-school programs to keep children safe):
  **www.ed.gov/pubs/SafeandSmart**
- U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice:
  **www.ncjrs.org.ojjdp**

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